Chriſtian Morals:

OR,

DISCOURSES

On the ſeveral

Human, Divine, Chriſtian, and Social

VIRTUES:

Being a SEQUEL to the

LORD'S-DAY Evening Entertainment.

To which is added,

A SERMON occaſioned by the Death of our late Sovereign King GEORGE II. preached at *Cheſhunt* in *Hertfordſhire*, *Nov.* 9, 1760.

By JOHN MASON, A. M.

In TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

Ανταϰολουθησι δι αλλήλαις αι αρεται· ϰ᾽ παρ ω αι των αρετων ακολουθιαι, παρα τυτω ϰ᾽ η σωτηρια.

Clem. Alexand. Strom. l. 2. c. 18.

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MDCCLXI.

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE

PREFACE.

THAT the eſſence of Chriſtianity, as a ſcheme of grace adapted to form mankind for happineſs, conſiſts not ſo much in right Knowledge as in a right Temper and Practice, is a Sentiment ſo plain and obvious, that 'tis not a little ſtrange it ſhould ſo generally eſcape the obſervation of Chriſtians: or that when obſerv'd, it ſhould ſo rarely engage their attention. To a want of this, I conceive, is chiefly owing that wide diverſity of principles and purſuits, which we diſcern among the ſeveral ſorts of Chriſtians, who all profeſs to be conducted by the ſame infallible Rule of Faith and Manners.

A cloſe and ſteady application of the mind to the original Deſign of the chriſtian Inſtitution (the perfection and happineſs of our nature) and the ſubſervience of all its principles and precepts to that Deſign, in a way ſuitable to the circumſtances of deprav'd and imperfect Beings; I ſay, a cloſe and conſtant attention to this, would, I believe, in a good meaſure prevent thoſe exorbitant excurſions and wild conceits, which perſons of a different tincture and turn are too apt to indulge; not leſs at the expence of their own underſtanding, than to the diſhonour of Chriſtianity and its bleſſed Author. For ſure it reflects no great honour on a man's Judgment, to give the reins to a warm and haſty Imagination, in affairs of the moſt important concern, and where a Miſtake is extremely dangerous: and that without the leaſt apparent apprehenſion of being led wrong by ſuch a Guide.

But there is nothing of Myſtery in all this. For an uncorrected Imagination always aſſumes the privilege of being ſole Judge of its own ſentiments and proceedings. And her Judgment is no leſs confident, than her Conduct precipitant. Which ac-

accounts for that trite but juſt Obſervation, 'that they who are moſt miſtaken are commonly moſt aſſur'd; and leaſt able to bear 'the liberty which others take to diſpute or 'contradict their Deciſions.'

A man of this ſanguine make, I believe, would of all others be thought the leaſt qualified for the *Chair* in any ſociety; much leſs where the ſubjects of Debate are matters of the higheſt importance, and require the moſt calm and accurate Diſcuſſion: and whenever a Writer is pleas'd to aſſume it (as moſt Writers are apt to do) he ought however, if it be only to conciliate the reſpect due to his place, to preſerve the external decorum, modeſty and moderation of a *Chair-man*.

It is to be fear'd that the productions of ſome of our religious Writers, by too much indulging their native warmth in ſupport of their favourite Sentiments, are more fitted to make and eſtabliſh Infidels than Chriſtians. And it is really a melancholy conſideration, that not only the ſons of Bigottry and Ignorance, by fathering their moſt abſurd notions on the chriſtian Revelation, but men of ſenſe and learning, by ſtripping it of ſome

of its moſt eſſential excellences, ſhould ſo inadvertently diſfigure the religion they mean to defend: and by paring off its ſuperfluities with too haſty a hand, wound it to the quick.

By crouding too much ſail, when the Ballaſt is light, men are in danger of running upon the ſhelves, and of making ſhipwreck of their Faith, Judgment, and Charity.

If we preſume to differ from a man of this complexion, who is incapable of Self-diffidence, he will, without the leaſt compaſſion to our prejudices, immediately pronounce us *blind Believers* (*a*), who *abſurdly miſapply* the holy Scriptures (*b*): whilſt he is all the while entirely unconſcious that he ſtands in any need of that candor which he denies to others.

The Author of a late celebrated performance, who attempts to revive the long exploded Notion of *Bardiſanes* and *Origen* *, tells us abſolutely, that *there is no ſuch expreſſion to be found in any of the Writers of the*

(*a*) *Bourn*'s Diſcourſes, Vol. I. p. 282.
(*b*) Id. p. 278.
* See the Hiſt. of the Apoſtles Creed, p. 399, &c.

the new Teſtament, as a Reſurrection of the Body, or of the Fleſh (*c*). How then muſt we underſtand the Apoſtle, 1 *Cor.* xv. 53? *this corruptible* (το φθαρτον τουτο) *muſt put on incorruption; and this mortal* (το θνητον τουτο) *muſt put on immortality.* And ver. 44. *It is ſown a natural Body; it is raiſed a ſpiritual Body.* But if theſe expreſſions be not thought ſufficiently ſtrong, there is another place wherein the Apoſtle aſſerts what this Gentleman denies, in the moſt plain and abſolute terms that can be. It is *Rom.* viii. 11. *If the ſpirit of him that raiſed up Jeſus from the dead dwell in you, he that raiſed up Chriſt from the dead* (ζωοποιησει και τα θνητα σωματα υμων) SHALL MAKE EVEN YOUR DEAD BODIES LIVE. — How could our author then ſo peremptorily aſſert, that *there is* NO SUCH *expreſſion in any of the Writers of the new Teſtament, as a Reſurrection of the Body or of the Fleſh?*

A wiſe man, to be ſure, will never embrace the opinions that are commonly receiv'd, purely becauſe they are ſo; however, he will take care that in the hurry of

(*c*) *Bourn*'s Diſcourſes, Advertiſement, p. xxx.

his Zeal to depart from them, he does not leave Scripture behind him.

Again, this Author tells us (V. I. p. 352.) that *the Reformation of mankind in this world, is not repreſented in the writings of the new Teſtament, as being the principal end and deſign of our Saviour's Enterprize.* — And yet the Apoſtle *John* tells us, that *for this purpoſe the Son of GOD was manifeſted, that he might deſtroy the works of the Devil* (1 John iii. 8.) and that *he was manifeſted to take away our ſins* (ver. 5.) And the Apoſtle *Peter*, that Chriſt *his own ſelf bare our ſins in his own Body on the tree; that we being dead to ſin, ſhould live unto righteouſneſs* (1 Pet. ii. 24.)—And the Apoſtle *Paul*, that *the Grace of GOD* (or the Goſpel) *which bringeth ſalvation to all men* (σωτηριος πασιν ανθρωποις) *hath appear'd; teaching us that denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world.* And that Chriſt *gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity; and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works,* (Tit. ii. 11, 12.) Which declarations of theſe inſpired Penmen, with many others to the ſame purpoſe, I am extremely

tremely at a loſs to reconcile with this Propoſition; that *the Reformation of mankind in this world, is not repreſented in the writings of the new Teſtament, as being the principal end and deſign of our Saviour's Enterprize.*

But this Writer lays us under another difficulty: and that is, not only to reconcile him to ſcripture, but to reconcile him to himſelf.—In the firſt paragraph of his *Adverti ſement to the Reader*, he tells us that *the writers of the new Teſtament* ALWAYS *mean by the term αναςασις or Reſurrection, a reſtoration to life; or that operation or event, by which the perſon who dies paſſes from death to life.*—Well, let us ſuppoſe this to be true.—But he tells us afterwards, (Vol. I. p. 274.) that *the term Reſurrection in Scripture* ALWAYS *means a future ſtate.* — What muſt we do now? *The action or operation of paſſing from death to life*, and the *future ſtate* in which the ſoul exiſts, after this action of paſſing from death to life, are plainly two different Ideas. But if the ſcripture by the word *αναςασις always* means the former, how can it *always* mean the latter? ſo *vice versâ*. Both theſe propoſitions cannot be true. But many of his Readers, I believe, know

know them both to be falſe. And that the word αναςασις is uſed by the writers of the new Teſtament, ſometimes in one of thoſe ſenſes and ſometimes in the other. —— The former, *viz. the action of paſſing from death unto life*, is without doubt the moſt common ſenſe; and that in which the word *Reſurrection* is us'd by the Apoſtle *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* xv. But in the latter ſenſe, in which it denotes the *future ſtate* in general, or the ſtate of the ſoul after death, it is no leſs evidently us'd in other places, e. g. *Mat.* xxii. 28. *Therefore in the Reſurrection* (εν τη ουν αναςασει) i. e. in the future ſtate, *whoſe wife ſhall ſhe be of the ſeven?* So in our Saviour's Anſwer to this Cavil of the Sadducees, *ver.* 30. (εν τη αναςασει) *in the Reſurrection*, or future ſtate, *they neither marry, nor are given in marriage.* And that our Lord here intended by the word (αναςασις) to denote the *future ſtate* in general, or the future ſtate of the Bleſſed in particular, appears from the Argument he makes uſe of to prove the reality of that ſtate againſt the Sadducees, who denied it. *Ver.* 31, 32. *But as touching the Reſurrection of the dead* (or a ſtate of exiſtence after death) *have you not read that which was ſpoken unto*

unto you by GOD, *ſaying, I am the* GOD *of Abraham, and the* GOD *of Iſaac, and the* GOD *of Jacob; God is not the* GOD *of the dead, but of the living.* And therefore *Abraham, Iſaac* and *Jacob* are now living, or exiſting in another ſtate. Nor ſhall we find it an eaſy matter to prove our Saviour's reaſoning to be clear and concluſive againſt the *Sadducees*, if we take the word (αναστασις) in any other ſenſe.

Again, he tells us (Vol. I. p. 351.) that *in reality a general reformation of mankind, in any high degree, ſeems to be impracticable by any means whatſoever.*—And yet in a few pages after, (p. 362.) he ſays, *We have indeed ground to hope, that the Goſpel will have in ſome future ages, more extenſive and beneficial effects, than it hath hitherto obtain'd: becauſe the ſame ſpirit of prophecy which predicted, in ſo ſtrong and remarkable terms, the infatuation, corruption and ſlavery of the chriſtian nations, hath foretold alſo as clearly their Deliverance and* REFORMATION: *a Reformation which hath already taken place in a conſiderable degree in ſome nations, as we have the happineſs to experience: and all wiſe chriſtians are waiting the conduct of Providence,*

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in order to the accompliſhment of the whole, in a univerſal change of the chriſtian world, and the CONVERSION *of the Jews and other nations: and this will be in a* RELIGIOUS *ſenſe, the Kingdom and Glory of our Saviour on earth.*—Sure, then, *a general reformation of mankind, in a high degree, is* NOT *impracticable* BY ANY MEANS WHATSOEVER.

I am not writing a *critique* upon this Author; or I would animadvert upon his extraordinary definition of a *Miracle:* which, he ſays, *is in other words, a manifeſt effect and demonſtration of the power and providence of GOD* (*d*). Which makes every thing we ſee a Miracle.—And his definition of *Antichriſt:* to which he tells us *the title of Chriſt's vicar or ſubſtitute on earth* EXACTLY *anſwers* (*e*).

I have nothing to do here with the peculiarities of Mr. *B*—*'s* theological *tenets:* but am inclin'd to think that ſuch marks of Temerity and Precipitance, will be no advantage to him in making Proſelytes; eſpecially among thinking, ſolid and judicious Readers.

Theſe

(*d*) Vol. II. p. 17.
(*e*) Vol. I. p. 346.

Theſe ſhort ſtrictures are by no means intended to give the leaſt offence to this ingenious Writer; to many of whoſe ſentiments I moſt heartily ſubſcribe; and to none more freely, than to that excellent and judicious Obſervation of his — that *How much ſoever perſons may aſcribe to their own enlarged underſtandings, and ſuperiority of mind to vulgar cuſtoms and prejudices; yet in fact it is the ſame* LITTLENESS OF MIND *and* PRECIPITANCE OF TEMPER, *the ſame want of* ATTENTION, *and of an* IMPARTIAL *and* COMPREHENSIVE *judgment, which diſpoſes men to reject or deſpiſe what is true and uſeful, as to embrace what is falſe and hurtful: and it is equally the part of every honeſt and judicious perſon, to ſupport the true principles of Religion and the rational Worſhip of* GOD, *as to reject the extravagances of Credulity and Superſtition (g).*

But while ſome are lopping off the main *Branches* of Chriſtianity, others are ſtriking at its *Root*; by depreciating moral virtue and good works, and ſubſtituting in their room that Faith which *without them is dead:* or

(g) *Bourn's* Diſcourſes, &c. Vol. II. p. 126, 127.

or by ſtrenuouſly inſiſting on our total Inability to perform them, or the danger of truſting to them. While others pay a greater regard to the *Leaves* of a fair profeſſion and an outward ſhow of ſanctity, than to the ſubſtantial *Fruits* of a holy Life.

The good ſenſe and learning of ſome in the latitudinarian way, confirm their friends in *that*, while the ſerious temper and piety of others in the narrow and rigid ſcheme, render their followers inflexible in *this*. — Alas, that good ſenſe and ſeriouſneſs, learning and piety, charity and orthodoxy, ſhould ever be ſeparated! or that when ſeparated, ſhould be proſtituted to ſuch unworthy ends! — O, when will a wrong Zeal ceaſe to miſlead ſome of the beſt minds into the moſt dangerous extremes!—Never, till that Zeal be corrected by Grace and Wiſdom; and the foundation of Religion be laid in *Humility*, and the true *Knowledge of GOD and ourſelves*.

'It is much to be deſir'd, ſaid the late 'pious and ingenious Mr. *Hervey*, (ſpeaking of a well meaning and *moſt pious* man, but in one particular very *injudicious*; 'it is 'much to be deſir'd, ſays he) that religious

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'perſons may have *Wiſdom* with their *Zeal*; '*Eyes in their Wings*: that as far as is con-'ſiſtent with the exerciſe of Integrity, and 'diſcharge of Duty, we may *give no offence*, '*neither to the Jew, nor to the Greek, nor to* '*the church of* GOD' (*b*).

I don't mean by this Quotation any oblique Retort on that worthy Author, whom I much admire. For though ſome of his peculiar ſentiments may be verging to an indefenſible extreme, and have a worſe tendency than he apprehended, yet he has a right to all our Candor, who was himſelf ſo bright a pattern of it. And his unaffected Humility, Modeſty, and Piety, will contribute no leſs than his native Elegance, fine Imagination, and polite Learning, to rank him among the moſt uſeful and amiable Writers.——Of the former of which Qualities, we have a ſtriking ſpecimen in one of his Letters: where ſpeaking of a new edition of his *Dialogues between Theron and Aſpaſio*, he ſays to his friend — 'If they re-'cede a Hair's Breadth from the unerring 'Standard, if they differ one jot or tittle 'from GOD's holy Word; in that jot or 'tittle,

(*b*) See his Letters, Vol. II. Letter 31.

'tittle, I moſt earneſtly wiſh, the world may 'not receive them; and that I my ſelf may 'have Grace to retract them.' Vol. II. Letter 55. —— Again, 'O my dear Friend, 'what need have we for Prayer, to be gui-'ded aright amidſt ſo many different opi-'nions! even of great and good men. *Ar-'minius*, *Calvin*, *Baxter*, all excellent men 'in their way! yet how divided in their no-'tions! — GOD of his unerring Wiſdom 'aſſiſt us in all our Determinations! GOD 'of his infinite Mercy defend us from all 'error!' Id. Vol. II. Let. 129.

I have always thought that the beſt way to moderate the Zeal of Chriſtians for their ſeveral party diſtinctions, is to divert it: and to recall their attention to the acknowledged importance of thoſe undiſputed principles, without the practical influence of which no man can be a chriſtian indeed: and all the good ſenſe, and all the orthodoxy in the world, will avail nothing. And herein I am ſupported by an authority which every chriſtian owns to be infallible.

O, did deep Humility, divine Love, fervent Faith, and heart-felt Charity, (the reſpective ſources of all the *human*, *divine*, *chriſ-*

chriſtian, and *ſocial* Virtues) but once ſhed their heavenly Influence in our ſouls; how ſoon ſhould we learn to deſpiſe (*argutias illas et minutias theologicas*) that light chaff of myſtic or minute ſubtleties in divinity, which ſome are ſo fond of; and to bend all our care and efforts, in dependance on Divine Grace, to cultivate in our ſelves thoſe holy diſpoſitions, which conſtitute all our Happineſs, both in this world and for ever!

To contribute ſomewhat to this great end, I have once more caſt in my mite: as what I judg'd to be the greateſt piece of ſervice (by the Bleſſing of GOD) I am capable of doing the Cauſe and Goſpel of Chriſt, whilſt I live.

And if I have done any ſort of Juſtice to my Subjects, in endeavouring to delineate the ſeveral parts of the Chriſtian Temper, the Reader, upon a ſerious, and candid peruſal of the whole, I believe will not fail to draw theſe two concluſions, *viz.* that the perſon in whoſe heart theſe various virtues continue to have their reigning influence, muſt be for ever happy. – And the Religion that ſo fervently enforces theſe holy and exalted principles, muſt be Divine.

If it be aſk'd, why I chuſe to tread in ſo beaten a path; and reſume thoſe Subjects which have already been ſo well manag'd and even exhauſted by others; and on which it cannot be ſuppoſed I can ſay any thing *new*. I anſwer, – that ſince the revival of letters every Subject in the whole *Cyclopædia* has been ſo thoroughly canvaſs'd, that were none permitted to write, but thoſe who had ſomething *new* to produce, the Preſs would be open to almoſt none but Journaliſts, Travellers, Biographers, and the Fellows of the Royal Society. And yet I have known ſome, with a true *Athenian* Taſte, cenſure even a piece on Divinity, purely becauſe there was nothing *new* in it. But ſerious Chriſtians, I believe, deſire to read Sermons with the ſame view with which they come to hear them: not ſo much to be inform'd of what they did not know, as to be reminded of, and impreſs'd with, the Importance of what they are too apt to forget.

Far be it from me to depreciate thoſe worthy Writers who have gone before me in the track of *Chriſtian Morals*: with whom I have no pretence to a competition. However I cannot but think, that in general their

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Plan hath been too much confin'd, or their Scheme not regularly digeſted, or their Diſquiſitions too abſtracted, or the moral Obligations not preſented in that light, nor urg'd with that force, that was requiſite to command the attention and impreſs the hearts of *common Chriſtians*. Which I have endeavour'd to keep in view throughout this Work.

Theſe Sermons are chiefly intended for the uſe of Families, as a Sequel to the *Lord's Day Evening Entertainment:* I thought proper therefore to affix to each of them (as I did to thoſe of a preceding Volume) a ſuitable Hymn; extracted moſtly from ſome of our Poets who have conſecrated the Muſe to the ſervice of Religion: with a view to encourage thoſe who read them in their Families, to introduce Pſalmody into their ſocial Worſhip; and to facilitate that delightful Duty to thoſe who practiſe it.

The funeral Diſcourſe for the late King was never deſign'd for publick View. But by the repeated inſtances of ſeveral who heard it preach'd, I was determin'd at length to

annex it to this Collection: notwithſtanding ſo many better on the ſame occaſion have appear'd before it. That it comes out ſo unſeaſonably late, is owing to the unexpected Delay of the Preſs.

Finally, that theſe plain and practical Diſcourſes may be a means to awaken and fix the attention of all who read them, to the undoubted importance of their ſeveral Subjects, to form the ſolid and conſiſtent Chriſtian, was the ſincere Intention, and that GOD would pleaſe to bleſs them to this end, is the earneſt prayer of the Author.

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Page 6, line 9, for *whence*, read hence. P. 56, l. 7, for *conſidered*, r. conſider. P. 58, l. 1, for *proceeded*, r. proceed. P. 61, l. 7 from the bottom, after *much*, r. as. P. 133. l. 9. after *ſoon*, r. as.

SERMON

SERMON I.

Of HUMILITY.

1 PET. v. 5.

-------- *Be ye clothed with Humility.*

RIGHT Faith, right Temper, and right Practice, compleat the Chriſtian. The firſt comprehends what we are to *believe*; the next, what we are to *be*; the laſt, what we are to *do*. SERM. I.

Tho' the firſt be ſubſervient to the two laſt, yet it may conſiſt without them. A man may have very ſound Sentiments of Religion, and yet betray an unchriſtian temper, and lead an ungodly Life.

SERM. I.

The Temper and Practice of a chriſtian conſiſt in the regular and uniform exerciſe of all the *human*, *divine*, *chriſtian* and *ſocial* Virtues; under the influence of chriſtian principles: or in a ſteady practical regard to all the Duties we owe to ourſelves, to GOD, to our Redeemer, and to our Fellow-creatures.

The deſign of the following diſcourſes, is to explain and recommend the ſeveral chriſtian virtues compriz'd under each of theſe heads; in order to give you a diſtinct view and brief ſcheme of *chriſtian Morals*.

The firſt Claſs contains the *Human* Virtues; or the duties we owe to our ſelves.

And of theſe, and indeed of all the virtues that form the chriſtian Life and Temper, *Humility* is the chief: the firſt round of that Ladder by which the Soul aſcends to GOD. Humility is the Baſis on which all the other virtues are built; and without which they cannot ſubſiſt. It is therefore moſt fit we ſhould begin with this.

And in diſcourſing upon this fundamental principle of practical Chriſtianity, I propoſe,

I. To ſhew you what it is.

II.

SERM. I.

II. I ſhall offer to your conſideration ſome general Reflections tending more particularly to illuſtrate it's true nature and excellence.

III. Conſider the peculiar fruits and advantages that ariſe from it. And

Laſtly, Shew you how to attain it.

I. I am to ſhew you what this Virtue of Humility is.

Humility is a *lowlineſs of mind*, founded on a conſcious ſenſe of our own imperfections, guilt and wants. So the original word (ταπεινοφρωσυνη) properly ſignifies, and ſo it is render'd, *Phil.* ii. 3. *In lowlineſs of mind let each eſteem other better than himſelf.* Eph. iv. 2. *Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, with all Lowlineſs and Meekneſs.* In both which places the Greek word is the ſame with that which in the text is tranſlated *Humility*.

Humility then is Lowly-mindedneſs: as Pride is High-mindedneſs.

But let it be remember'd, that this notion of humility infers nothing mean, abject and ſervile. There is a wide difference between a Lowlineſs and a Littleneſs of mind; for

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chriſtian humility is the trueſt magnanimity: tho' it lies low, it looks high: and is not only conſiſtent with, but conducive to, the nobleſt elevation of ſentiment. It ſhews an uncommon Greatneſs of mind, ſolid ſenſe, and a ſound underſtanding: and ſets but little Value upon thoſe accidental and contingent advantages of Fortune, Fame, Birth, Beauty, Power and worldly Influence, which little minds are ſo full and fond of.

II. I proceed now to lay before you ſome general obſervations that tend to illuſtrate more particularly the true nature and excellence of this chriſtian virtue.

1. It is a Document peculiar to the School of Chriſt; and not to be found (as I remember) in any ſyſtem of mere pagan morals. *

Whether this virtue of Humility was diſcoverable to the philoſophic world by the mere

* Which ſhews the great defect of that kind of morality. The *Stoics* were ſo far from diſcovering the leaſt notice of it, that no ſet of men were more aſſuming, or ever betray'd more ridiculous Vanity: calling their wiſe man ſelf-ſufficient, equal to the Gods; nay, ſuperior to them; ſince they were virtuous out of neceſſity, he out of choice. As to

mere light of unaſſiſted reaſon, I will not pretend to ſay; but 'tis very evident that that pride of ſcience, ſo natural to weak and uninlighten'd minds, prevented them from diſcerning it. SERM. I.

2. It is the *firſt* Leſſon that is taught in the School of Chriſt, the firſt rudiment of Chriſtian Knowledge: the firſt thing to be learn'd in order to be a Chriſtian; as the knowledge of letters, is in order to be a ſcholar: which is not more neceſſary to the acquiſition of ſcience, than Humility is to a right Religious character. And therefore it was one of the firſt things recommended by our Saviour to his Diſciples: which he taught them by the Emblem of a Child that he ſet before them; declaring, that unleſs they diſcover'd the ſame meek, humble, teachable, tractable, unprejudic'd and diſpaſſionate temper which they ſaw in that Infant, they were not fit to become his Diſciples (*a*):

to *Socrates* indeed, there was ſome appearance of Humility in his declaring that he *knew nothing*; if it proceeded not from an affectation of being eſteem'd wiſer than all other men on that very account; or from a view to expoſe the vanity and preſumption of the Dogmatiſts more effectually thereby.

(*a*) Matt. xviii. 3.

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and that whoever diſcover'd moſt of that temper ſhould ſtand higheſt in his Eſteem (*b*).

And 'tis with great reaſon that this is requir'd as the firſt qualification of Diſciples, becauſe nothing is a greater ſpur to diligence than a ſenſe of Ignorance, or a greater hindrance to proficiency than a conceit of Knowledge. And whence it is that many who pretend to a ſuperior penetration into the true nature of the Chriſtian Doctrines, *know nothing yet as they ought to know* (*c*); and while they imagine they are fit *to be Teachers of others have need that one ſhould teach them again what be the firſt principles of the Oracles of God* (*d*); *who think themſelves to be ſomething, when they are nothing* (*e*); and *deſiring to be teachers of the Goſpel, underſtand neither what they ſay, nor whereof they affirm* (*f*); *but being proud, know nothing; but doating about Queſtions and Strife of words* (*g*).

3. Tho' Humility is the moſt lowly, 'tis the moſt lovely of the Chriſtian Virtues, and throws an amiable Luſtre on all the reſt. 'Tis

(*b*) Matt. xviii. 4. (*c*) 1 Cor. viii. 2. (*d*) Heb. v. 12.
(*e*) Gal. vi. 3. (*f*) 1 Tim. i. 7. (*g*) 1 Tim. vi. 4.

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'Tis in the chriſtian Life the ſame as the well diſpoſed ſhades in a Picture, which ſet it off to advantage; and tho' they are not ſtriking of themſelves, yet give an inexpreſſible Beauty to the whole Piece. There is no Virtue that ſooner attracts the regard of the wiſe and good, or that is more agreeable to all. Modeſty with little merit renders a man belov'd and eſteem'd, while the higheſt attainments with a haughty heart are univerſally diſguſtful and odious.

4. Humility is always attended with her ſiſter Grace, *Meekneſs*; with whom ſhe walks hand in hand, preceded by Wiſdom, and followed by her genuine off-ſpring, Patience, Peace, Contentment and Gratitude. Theſe two ſiſter Graces indeed are ſo much alike that they are not eaſily to be diſtinguiſh'd, the one from the other, unleſs they are ſeen together, or carefully compar'd with their oppoſites. Humility is oppos'd to pride, Meekneſs to paſſion; the one ſupports us under the afflicting hand of GOD, the other keeps us calm under the Provocations we meet with from men. Humility diſpoſes us to bear with patience the ſorrows we ſuffer; and Meekneſs to forgive the Injuries we

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receive. They are both of the ſame ſweet, amiable and gentle diſpoſition; but in the one it flows from a conſciouſneſs of it's own Infirmities; in the other, from benevolence and Love: the one reſults from ſelf-acquaintance, the other from fervent and univerſal Charity; and both ſtand in need of Wiſdom to conduct them to their proper Objects; and of Prudence to regulate their Exerciſe.

5. Humility, like all other Virtues, has its counterfeits. That which is moſt commonly taken for it is falſe modeſty: from which therefore we ſhould be the more careful to diſtinguiſh it. Humility is no enemy to a juſt and laudable Ambition; a falſe Modeſty is often a friend to a low and culpable one. The former with all its lowlineſs cannot condeſcend to any thing mean or unworthy; the latter with all it's creeping will ſeek to riſe by Diſſimulation and Flattery. The one complies only when it ſhould, the other often does ſo when it ſhould not. The one reſiſts the influence of bad cuſtoms with dignity and firmneſs, the other ſubmits to them for want of power to oppoſe them.

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In a word, the one is a virtuous Habit, the other a faulty Temper. SERM. I.

Sometimes a ſullen reſerv'd ſpirit with neglected mien and ſordid attire may paſs for Humility: but this lowly Virtue, guided by Decorum, may in certain circumſtances appear in elegant array, while Pride is often ſeen in Rags.

Neither is an abject, cringing, daſtardly ſpirit, Humility. They are both inoffenſive and condeſcending: but the former is excited and influenc'd by the fear of men, the latter by the fear of GOD.

Good nature and politeneſs join'd, bear the neareſt reſemblance to this Virtue: but the former is only a happy Inſtinct, the latter an artificial Condeſcenſion.

And 'tis for want of diſtinguiſhing it, from theſe its counterfeits, that the true nature and excellence of this Virtue are ſo little underſtood, and ſo generally diſregarded.

But who would imagine that *that* which of all things in the world is moſt contrary to it, ſhould affect to paſs for it? and that pride itſelf ſhould aſſume the air and garb of Humility? yet ſo it ſometimes happens. The proud man can deſcend on certain occaſions

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caſions to put on the appearance of this Virtue; either from an ambition of that reſpect that is univerſally paid it, or from an extorted reverence of that excellence which he cannot imitate.

But what appears ſomething extraordinary in this caſe is, that the artifice ſhould ſucceed even after it is detected, and that he who puts it on ſhould be ſtill deem'd an humble man; but *ſomewhat proud of his Humility*. Which is little leſs than a contradiction in terms: for an humble man can no more be proud of his Humility, than a proud man can be humble for his pride. True Humility can never produce any thing ſo contrary to its nature. A man may be proud of the outward ſhow and appearance of Humility; but if he had the thing itſelf, he could no more be proud of it than he can rejoice that he is griev'd, or mourn that he is glad. Contraries, inſtead of producing, always deſtroy each other. All thoſe vile and ſelf-reproaching expreſſions which ſome ſo liberally uſe may proceed only from affectation, or cuſtom, or a latent vanity of heart; and are no more a ſign of Humility than Flattery is of Friendſhip. Humility

ſhews

ſhews itſelf not in words, but in it's behaviour.——But I proceed now

III. To lay before you ſome of the peculiar fruits and advantages that ariſe from this chriſtian virtue of Humility: which I ſhall briefly compare with the effects of Pride as I proceed. And

1. Humility is the ſource of Contentment, and the moſt ſolid peace of mind. It is the Chriſtian's beſt Defence againſt the Shafts of Envy and Defamation; which, through the advantage of his lowly ſituation, fly moſtly over his head, or elſe fall harmleſs at his feet. Obloquy and Contempt, which ſting a proud man to the heart, give the humble Chriſtian no pain at all. Popular applauſe was never his Ambition, and therefore the want of it is no mortification; and if inſtead of it he meets with Slander and Reproach, conſcious of his Integrity he commits himſelf and his reputation to that GOD who knows his heart, and *judgeth righteouſly*. If he hears that any one has revil'd him, he is ready to ſay with the philoſopher, 'had he known 'me better he would have ſaid worſe things

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'of me than that;' or with the Apoſtle *Paul, It is a ſmall thing to be judg'd of man's judgment, he that judgeth me is the* LORD.

The fierceſt ſtorms of adverſity blow over him. Humility gives a pliancy to his mind, which ſaves it by yielding to the force it cannot reſiſt. So the weak and bending Reed weathers out the Tempeſt that fells the tall and ſturdy Oak.

The proud man ſeldom finds that reſpect and deference paid him which he thinks his due, and therefore is fretful, diſſatisfied and peeviſh: the humble man meets with more of this than he knows he deſerves, and therefore is content, well-pleas'd and thankful. For whatever ill nature there may be in that pleaſure which the world commonly takes in mortifying a proud man, they have ſtill good nature enough left to give countenance to modeſt and ſelf-diffident merit.

But under the afflicting viſitations of Providence the difference between theſe two characters is moſt apparent. The one looks at nothing but ſecond cauſes, and lays all the blame upon the Inſtruments of his Miſfortune: the other (by whatever means his trouble befell him) devoutly eyes the hand

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of GOD in it, and ſubmits to it. The one by Impatience and Fretfulneſs doubles his Burden; the other by a meek Reſignation takes off more than half the weight of it. And finally, one comes out of his trouble harden'd and unreclaim'd; the other, ſoftned and greatly improv'd in a pious, thankful ſpirit. SERM. I.

2. Humility puts the mind into the beſt diſpoſition it can be in, to acquire the moſt important Knowledge, and to improve that which it has already attain'd. Nothing more obſtructs our progreſs in wiſdom than Pride; nothing promotes it more than Humility. A vain man is intent on diſplaying the little Knowledge he has; a wiſe man on getting more; not with a view to make a parade of it, but to improve himſelf by it: and therefore he is open to Inſtruction, from whatever quarter it comes, or by whatever means convey'd.

The ſelf-emptying Soul is moſt receptive of the Treaſures of Divine Wiſdom; whilſt the mind that is full of itſelf, or of the little Knowledge it has, excludes the entrance of further Light and Inſtruction. *Knowledge* (the Apoſtle obſerveth) *puffeth up:*

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up: that is, when lodg'd in a proud, unſanctified heart; but the poinancy of thoſe reflections which Humility ſuggeſts, pricks the Bubble and ſhews it's Emptineſs.

The vanity of Science, the confidence of Error, the bad effects of that *Knowledge that is falſely ſo called*, and the difficulty of coming at the Truth, would almoſt diſcourage us from the proſecution of it. *

But now Humility corrects all this: directs us to the moſt uſeful and ſubſtantial Knowledge; makes us cautious as well as diligent in the proſecution of it; modeſt in our reſearches, open to conviction, and willing to retract our Errors.

As no diſpoſition is more decent in Diſciples, or more conducive to their proficiency, it was therefore the firſt thing that Chriſt requir'd of his: and propos'd himſelf to them as their Pattern. *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly.*

Beſides, the lowly heart is the Temple in which the Spirit of GOD delights to dwell,

* 'We crowd about a little Spark,
'Learnedly labouring in the Dark;
'Never more bold than when moſt blind,
'And faſteſt run, when Truth's behind.' BAXTER.

as

as a Spirit of Illumination and Wiſdom. *With that man* (ſaith he) *will I dwell who is of a broken and contrite ſpirit. The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way* (*h*). SERM. I.

3. Humility is a diſpoſition of mind that is moſt pleaſing in the ſight of GOD, and never fails to ſecure his ſpecial Favour. Whilſt *he reſiſteth the proud, he giveth grace to the humble. Surely he ſcorneth the ſcorners, but giveth grace to the lowly* (i). And to the ſame purpoſe ſee that well known Promiſe, *Iſai.* lxvi. 1, 2. *Thus ſaith the Lord, the Heaven is my Throne, and the Earth is my foot-ſtool, where is the houſe that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my Reſt? for all theſe things my hands made, and all thoſe things have been, ſaith the Lord; but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite ſpirit, and that trembleth at my word.*

4. Humility conciliates not only the favour of GOD, but the eſteem of men: that is, of all wiſe and good men, whoſe eſteem is worth our wiſh. There is no character in life more generally odious and diſguſting

(*h*) Pſal. xxv. 9. (*i*) Prov. iii. 34.

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guſting than that of a vain, high-minded, ſelf-aſſuming man. The proud hate him as their Rival, and are ſhock'd at that indecency of Temper and Conduct in him, which they cannot ſee in themſelves. The wiſe and modeſt ſhun him; not only becauſe he always aims to ſhine above them (for that they can bear) but becauſe they are afraid of being inſulted by that pride and petulance which holds their modeſty in ſovereign contempt. The proud man is belov'd by none, becauſe he is not willing to be upon a level with any: but the humble man, by ſhewing himſelf a friend to every body, makes every one a friend to him; by opening his heart in Love to all, he makes his way to theirs. — And how nearly allied Humility is to Charity appears from hence, becauſe the deſcription which the Apoſtle gives of the *latter*, is in all it's particulars, exactly applicable to the *former*; for Humility, like Charity, *ſuffereth long and is kind:* Humility *envyeth not*: Humility *vaunteth not itſelf: is not puffed up: doth not behave itſelf unſeemly: ſeeketh not her own: is not eaſily provok'd: thinketh no evil: rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth: beareth all*

all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things (*k*). SERM. I.

Humility is the valley in which Benevolence delights to grow. 'For whatever 'profeſſions of Benevolence proud men may 'make, Pride and Benevolence are utterly 'inconſiſtent. He who is big with the ſen-'timents of his own dignity, muſt have an 'averſion to thoſe who do not ſeem to have 'as exalted an opinion of him as he has of 'himſelf. Now, as none can think as ex-'travagantly of a proud man, as he thinks 'of himſelf; the conſequence is, that he 'muſt hate all mankind, except a few flat-'terers. He muſt be angry with thoſe who 'do not proportion their regard to his *ima-'ginary deſerts*; which it is impoſſible to do. 'For tho' it be no difficult matter to diſcern 'how much merit a man *really* has; it is 'not quite ſo eaſy to determine how much 'he may *imagine* himſelf to have. There-'fore no proud man can be a benevolent or 'moral man'. *

5. As humility is on all accounts the moſt fit and decent Diſpoſition and Tem-

(*k*) 1 Cor. xiii. 4——7.

* *Seed*'s Diſcourſes, Vol. II. p. 357.

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per in ſuch weak dependant creatures as we are, ſo it leads to the moſt decent and becoming Conduct and Behaviour in every ſituation of Life. In a high ſtation it ſhines conſpicuouſly beautiful; and looks down with a ſweet and ſmiling Benevolence on all below it: and in a low ſtation it charms us with that innocent Chearfulneſs and Contentment which are its inſeparable attendants; and as its conſtant guards defend it from the inſults of Pride and Power. It gives the mind an unſhaken ſtability in every varying ſcene of Life, and leads it to a right Conduct in all. By the hand of Faith it lays faſt hold of Heaven; and thus fixt, all the moſt rapid revolutions of the earth under its feet can never move it; whilſt the light and empty mind, blown up with vanity is perpetually toſs'd about, like a Bubble, the ſport of every wind, till it ſuddenly burſts into nothing, and diſappears for ever.

6. Gratitude is another fruit of Humility. A proud man is thankful for nothing, a humble man for every thing: becauſe the one thinks he never has ſo much as he deſerves, the other that he has more. You never

never ſee the proud man ſo thankful in the higheſt proſperity, as you do the humble man in the deepeſt adverſity. He underſtands and practices that precept of the Apoſtle, which to a haughty mind appears ſo great a Paradox, *in every thing give thanks.* SERM. I.

7. Humility is the only way to true Honour: and finds that without ſeeking, which ambition ſeeks and labours for in vain. For Honour like a ſhadow (its proper Emblem) flies from thoſe that purſue, and follows them that ſhun it. That dignity indeed that conſiſts in external parade or pomp of Equipage may be commanded by Wealth and Power: but all the outward glare of Title and trappings of State can no more make a man honourable than they can make him healthy. They may attract the Gaze of the populace, but they can never of themſelves engage the Eſteem and Reſpect of wiſe and good men. But the man of ſolid Wiſdom, Modeſty, ſubſtantial and unaffected Virtue, attracts the inward regard, confidence and veneration of all around him; and eſpecially of the moſt judicious and diſcerning part of mankind. And the reaſon is plain, becauſe true Humi-

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lity is always attended with ſtrong Benevolence and approv'd Integrity; and therefore is the object of every man's Love, Eſteem and Confidence: which is real Honour.

And this conſequence is ſo obvious that we often meet with it in the reflections and obſervations which Solomon makes on human Life. *Before Honour is Humility (l). Before Deſtruction the heart of man is haughty, but before Honour is Humility (m). By Humility and the Fear of the* LORD, *are Riches and Honour and Life (n). A man's Pride ſhall bring him low, but Honour ſhall uphold the humble in ſpirit (o):* and to the ſame purpoſe and for the ſame reaſon our Saviour tells us, *that whoſoever exalteth himſelf ſhall be abaſed, and he that ſhall humble himſelf ſhall be exalted (p).*

Laſtly, Humility will render our Prayers acceptable to GOD, and inſure a gracious Anſwer to them. *The ſacrifices of* GOD *are a broken ſpirit; a broken and a contrite heart He will not deſpiſe (q). He forgeteth not the Cry*

(l) Prov. xv. 33. (m) Prov. xviii. 12. (n) Prov. xxii. 41. (o) Prov. xxix. 23. (p) Matt. xxiii. 12. (q) Pſal. li. 17.

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Cry of the humble, ſaith the Pſalmiſt (*r*). In which words much more is implied than expreſs'd. Forgetteth it! no, far from it: he delights to hear it, and will be ſure to anſwer it; for *the prayer of the upright is his Delight* (*s*). And with ſuch he has promis'd to dwell; *for thus ſaith the high and lofty one who inhabiteth Eternity, whoſe name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him alſo that is of a contrite and humble ſpirit; to revive the ſpirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite one* (*t*).

Theſe are ſome of the moſt beneficial fruits of Humility; of that firſt and fundamental virtue of Chriſtianity, which in our text we are commanded to *be clothed* or inveſted with: which we are to put on and carry about us continually; as no leſs neceſſary for the Comfort, Defence and Ornament of our Souls, than our Clothes are for our Bodies.

And to excite us hereunto and aſſiſt us herein, I am now

Laſtly, To lay before you a few Directions: which are proper to ſhew at once how

(*r*) Pſal. ix. 12. (*s*) Prov. xv. 8. (*t*) Iſai. lvii. 15.

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how this excellent Diſpoſition is to be *attain'd* and *improv'd*. And

1. Let us often think of GOD; and the glorious and infinite excellencies of his nature, as diſplay'd to us in his Word and Works. In whoſe Eye the whole Ocean is but *as a Drop in the Bucket*, and the whole Earth but as a *ſmall Duſt in the Balance*; who made all things out of nothing, and before whom all things are as nothing; or leſs *than nothing and vanity*: whoſe power is without Limit, whoſe purity is without Spot, whoſe wiſdom without Defect, and whoſe goodneſs knows no end: who call'd us into Being but yeſterday, and can reduce us into nothing in an Inſtant: upon whom we depend every moment we live, for every mercy we have: and to eternity ſhall do the ſame for all the Bleſſedneſs we hope for. Such exalted Thoughts of the great GOD ſeriouſly revolv'd and often entertain'd, cannot fail to lay us low in the Duſt, and make us cry out with *Job*, *behold I am vile (u)*.

2. Let

(u) *This will ſink us to the bottom of our Beings, and make us appear as nothing in our own ſight, when beheld from ſo vaſt a height. And this is really the greateſt elevation of the ſoul;*

and

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2. Let us often view and review our own Guilt, Imperfections and Wants.—Let us often ſurvey our Guilt: what we have done, and what we have deſerv'd: how often and how greatly we have offended our gracious GOD, and provok'd his almighty Juſtice.—But we are ſo immers'd in Guilt that we have loſt the ſenſe of it. Hence our ſecurity in the greateſt danger.—But Repentance awakens us, brings us to our ſenſes, to a right way of thinking, and therefore the firſt good ſymptom the Penitent diſcovers, is Humility. He is exceeding vile in his own eyes, becauſe he knows that ſin hath made him ſo in the eyes of GOD.

Again, let us view our Imperfections and Frailties, both of body and mind. In every faculty of Body, ſome or other of the mere animal creation excell us, except in our erect poſture; which is our conſtant Reproach and Shame, whilſt our hearts are ſtill bowing down toward the earth; and our minds as *prone* as the Bodies of thoſe Brutes that were made to ſerve us.—And if we look in-

and there is nothing in the world ſo noble and excellent, as the ſublimity of humble minds.

Scougal's Life of GOD, &c. p. 95.

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to our Souls, ah, what woful diſorders do we find there! in the ravage of our paſſions, the fooliſhneſs of our Thoughts, the power of Prejudice, the rage of Appetites, the perverſeneſs of our Wills, the darkneſs of our Underſtanding, the hardneſs of our Heart, its alienation from GOD, its propenſion to Evil, the force of our inward corruptions, and the imbecility of Reaſon to controul them; and, what is worſt of all, the total inſenſibility of the greateſt part of mankind to all theſe miſerable Diſorders of their mind, and the dreadful conſequence of them when they prevail. And how much of this is found in the beſt of us, he knows beſt who is moſt acquainted with his own heart.

And how many are our Wants? both natural and ſpiritual: none of which 'tis in our own power to ſupply. How many things do we conſtantly ſtand in need of for the health, ſupport and comfort of the Body; and the peace and happineſs of our ſouls! which of ourſelves we cannot provide. Were but one paſſion of the mind, or one humour of the body let looſe, or permitted to break forth unreſtrain'd, what miſery would inſtantly inſue! which would ſoon bring

bring on a Diſtraction of mind or a Diſſolution of the whole frame.—And is it for creatures ſo guilty, ſo frail, ſo needy, ſo totally dependant as we are, to be proud! ſure, *pride was never made for man.* SERM. I.

3. Let us often think how many of our fellow-creatures we ſee around us that ſurpaſs us in every valuable excellence, and we ſhall ſoon come to have meaner Thoughts of our ſelves. Eſpecially when we obſerve (as every day we may) many, whom providence has plac'd in a ſtation of life below us, more eminent for ſome or other of the Chriſtian virtues than we are, who have enjoy'd greater advantages to attain them.

4. Let us be frequent and very devout in prayer. This will often bring our Wants and our Sins to remembrance, and lay us in the Duſt before GOD. And let us earneſtly pray for the Grace of Humility; and eſpecially that every afflicting providence may be ſanctified to this purpoſe; that we may have a humble heart under humbling Diſpenſations.

5. Let us keep the Example of our great Lord and Maſter always before our Eyes: *who made himſelf of no reputation, took upon him*

SERM. I.

him the form of a ſervant, humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto death; who though he was rich yet for our ſakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. And what admirable Humility and Meekneſs did he diſcover towards all, and upon all occaſions, when he was here on earth!—A proud Diſciple of the humble Jeſus!—What a ſoliciſm! how inconſiſtent the character!

Laſtly, Let us often think how much the great GOD himſelf condeſcends from his Infinite Dignity for our ſakes. He who humbles himſelf to take notice of what is done in Heaven, how low does he ſtoop to hearken to our ſinful Prayers, to provide for our numerous Wants, and to entreat us to be reconciled to him! And ſhall a poor worm of the earth refuſe to be humble, when the great GOD of Heaven ſo much humbles himſelf for his ſake! This, if any thing, muſt for ever put all Pride out of countenance.

But if after all you ſay, 'I cannot bring 'this proud heart to be humble',—then be humble for *that:* and never entertain a favourable Thought of your ſelf, till you are.

The

The HYMN.

I.

'Come hither all ye weary Souls,
'To me (ſays our Redeemer) come:
'I'll give you reſt from all your toils,
'And raiſe you to my heavenly home.

II.

'They ſhall find reſt that learn of me;
'I'm of a meek and lowly mind:
'But paſſion rages like the ſea,
'And pride is reſtleſs as the wind.

III.

'Bleſt is the man whoſe ſhoulders take
'My yoke, and bear it with delight:
'My yoke is eaſy to his neck,
'My grace ſhall make the burden light.'

IV.

Jeſus, we come at thy command,
With faith, and hope and humble zeal
Reſign our ſpirits to thy hand,
To mould and guide us at thy will.

SERMON II.

Of CONTENTMENT.

HEB. xiii. 5.

Be content with ſuch things as ye have; for he hath ſaid, I will never leave thee, nor forſake thee.

SERM. II.

THE firſt of the human virtues is *Humility*; which I conſider'd in the former Diſcourſe: the ſecond is *Contentment*, which is the ſubject of this.—Contentment flows as naturally from Humility, as Happineſs doth from *that*. A humble man is content with every thing, becauſe he knows he hath more than he deſerves; a proud man with nothing, becauſe he thinks he hath leſs. In treating this part of the Chriſtian temper, I propoſe to conſider,

I. What

I. What this virtue of Contentment is.
II. Whence it ſprings.
III. How it is to be acquired.

I. What this chriſtian virtue of Contentment is.

Contentment is a peaceful and complacential acquieſcence in all the diſpoſitions of Providence, with regard to our worldly ſtate and condition; looking upon that which GOD ſends as fully ſufficient, and beſt for us. So the original phraſe in the text properly ſignifies (*a*): *be ſufficed with preſent things*; that is, be ſatisfied with your preſent circumſtances and ſupplies; becauſe they are ſuch as GOD hath appointed, and knows to be beſt for you. So that true Contentment, as a Chriſtian virtue, flows from Piety, and is ſomething eſſentially different from indolence and inſenſibility.

As a Chriſtian virtue it differs much from that which ſometimes reſembles it in a natural Temper. Tho' it muſt be owned, that ſome by the ſweet equipoiſe of their Paſſions,

(*a*) αρκουμενοι τοις παρουσιν.

SERM. II.

Paſſions, are born with a more happy diſpoſition to it than others.

Contentment by no means gives any countenance to Idleneſs, but is very conſiſtent with the moſt diligent endeavours, by all proper means, to mend our circumſtances. But if we cannot bring our condition to our mind, it teaches us to ſubmit our minds to our condition: and is oppoſite to a peeviſh, anxious, fretful, repining Temper.

Contentment ariſes not from a man's outward condition, but from his inward diſpoſition: ſo that if he is not content with that ſtate of life he is in, he would not be content in any ſtate of life he would be in. This perhaps may ſeem a paradox: but nothing is more true; and for this plain reaſon, becauſe a change of circumſtances would not change his Temper: and that reſtleſs and unſatisfied diſpoſition which gives him ſo much vexation *now*, would make him no leſs uneaſy *then*. So that a diſcontented mind renders a man equally unhappy in every ſtate of life.

Perhaps it is needleſs to obſerve to you, that the precept in the Text only requires

us

us to be well pleaſed and ſatisfied with the good things which providence allots us, as tranſient and temporary accommodations; and not to be ſo content with them, as to think them fully ſufficient for our happineſs, or to take up with them as our portion. SERM. II.

II. Having thus briefly open'd to you the true nature of this Chriſtian virtue, let us now conſider its proper ſource from whence it ſprings: that we may better know where to ſeek it, and how to diſtinguiſh it from its counterfeits. And

1. As I have juſt obſerv'd, Contentment is the genuine offspring of Humility: or the ſecond degree in the ſcale of Chriſtian perfection. The man who knows he deſerves nothing, is content with any thing, and thankful for every thing: and can eaſily comply with the Apoſtle's Injunction, which the proud man never can (1 *Tim.* vi. 8.) *having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.* Would we ſecure to ourſelves this invaluable Prize of Contentment, wherein the Happineſs of the preſent Life is univerſally allowed to conſiſt, let us endeavour then by all means to cultivate that humble and low-

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SERM. II.

ly ſpirit, which I explained and recommended to you in the foregoing Diſcourſe.

If we are in ſearch after Contentment we muſt put ourſelves under the guidance of Humility, which will lead us directly to the place where this ineſtimable Jewel is to be found: a Jewel that far ſurpaſſes the imaginary virtues of the philoſopher's ſtone; becauſe it turns every thing into that which is much more precious than gold.

2. Another ſource of contentment is a deep, fixed habitual ſenſe of GOD's particular Providence, that directs and preſides over all our affairs and concerns. For let us think thus with ourſelves; 'That Being whoſe 'power condeſcended to make me, can ne-'ver think it below his providence to take 'care of me. That every thing that relates 'to me, or concerns either my inward or 'outward man, is the object of his Provi-'dence, or order'd by him, his own Word 'does not permit me to doubt. He not only 'fixes the bounds of my habitation, but ap-'points my Lot: and every circumſtance of 'comfort or trouble that befalls me, is ſent 'by him: and as his Wiſdom and Goodneſs 'are infinite, ſo he knows, better than I do, what

'what condition is fitteſt for me; and will SERM. 'be ſure to appoint me what he ſees to be II. 'ſo. That very ſtate and condition of life I 'now am in, as it was appointed by him '(whatever I may think) is for certain beſt 'for me; and therefore I have all the rea-'ſon in the world to be content and thank-'ful.'

We are ready to think, that if we had it in our power to chuſe our own Condition we could make ourſelves happy. Whereas the truth is, that in *that* caſe we ſhould ſoon make ourſelves miſerable. For we little conſider how many greater dangers and difficulties, ſnares and temptations, we ſhould meet with in that higher ſtate of Life we affect, than we do in that we are in; and how ſoon thoſe dangers and temptations would prove fatal to our peace and intereſt. So that, next to the providence of GOD, we may aſcribe our own ſafety to our Impotence; and are only happy, becauſe we have it not in our power, by changing our ſtate, to make ourſelves miſerable. GOD hath a perfect knowledge of the capacities and inclinations of his Creatures; and what effect every condition will have upon them.

SERM. II.

He ſees what miſeries we ſhould be plung'd into, if we were ſuffer'd to chuſe for ourſelves; what Rocks we ſhould run upon, if we were allowed to ſteer our own courſe. And therefore in pure mercy he reſtrains us from ſo dangerous a freedom; denies our fatal wiſhes, and makes us happy, as it were, againſt our Wills. Since then the diſpoſal of our earthly Lot is ſafer and much better for us, in the hand of GOD than it would be in our own, we have the greateſt reaſon to be content with our preſent condition; as that which (all things conſider'd) is ſafer and better for us than any we could chuſe for ourſelves. Becauſe in conſulting our good, GOD does not confine his views (as we are apt to do) to preſent things, but looks forward to our future and eternal Intereſt.

3. Another ſpring of Contentment is, the experience we have had of the divine Bounty and Goodneſs to us in all the paſt ſcenes of Life. Are our worldly circumſtances worſe than they have been? ſtill we have enough; and much more than many others. That hand of providence that reſumes ſome of our earthly bleſſings and comforts, might have taken away more: and if it had, it would

would ſtill have been our duty to be content. GOD hath left us more than we deſerve; and perhaps hath taken away ſome of them only becauſe he ſaw we ſhould do more good to others, and leſs hurt to ourſelves, with what remains. SERM. II.

But are our worldly circumſtances better than they were? we have then great reaſon not only to be content but thankful. And that providence which hath provided for us all our days, and doth ſo well provide for us ſtill, is a better ſecurity to us of future proviſion, than the richeſt ſtores we could lay up for ourſelves.

4. Contentment ariſes in a good meaſure from a juſt Eſtimate of the true nature of all earthly things. Men generally ſet too great a value upon the bleſſings they have not, and too little upon thoſe they have. The reaſon of this is; the Bleſſings we enjoy, we have exhauſted; gone to the bottom of them; and have not found ſo much in them, as we expected from them: and therefore are ready to imagine there is ſomething better, and more ſubſtantial in thoſe we have never taſted. But that is a miſtake: the nature of all ſenſual ſatisfactions is the

SERM. II.

ſame: they ſoon grow vapid and loſe their reliſh. The pleaſure lies more in the expectation than enjoyment. For poſſeſſion always diminiſhes the pleaſure the Imagination magnified.

Such is the Bounty of our Creator, that the moſt valuable and ſubſtantial of all earthly Bleſſings he hath ſcattered with a moſt liberal hand: *viz.* thoſe that are neceſſary for the health of the Body, and the ſupport of Life: but more ſparingly, thoſe which contribute only to the vanity and luxury of it; which many are miſerable with, and all may be happy without. And if Providence then hath beſtowed upon us thoſe things that are moſt neceſſary and moſt ſafe, inſtead of thoſe things that are unneceſſary but moſt dangerous, have we not great reaſon to be thankful? Our real wants are few, and ſoon ſupplied; and thoſe ſupplies near at hand. A ſufficient foundation of Content: for *nature wants but little, nor that little long.* We ſhould learn to eſtimate the value of our mercies by the want of them. Is a man neceſſarily miſerable becauſe he hath not Wealth, and Honour and Equipage? by no means; we every day ſee the contrary. But

if

if he hath not Food and Raiment, nor Health, nor Friends, nor Peace of mind, he is really wretched. Theſe then are by far the moſt ſubſtantial Bleſſings. Having theſe then let us be well pleaſed and thankful; and not repine that we have not thoſe leſs ſolid, but more ſplendid Advantages which but few poſſeſs and fewer ſtill enjoy. SERM. II.

In point of earthly Enjoyments, I believe men are more upon a Level than is generally imagined: or that upon the whole, and all things conſider'd, there is not that diſparity between the happineſs of the rich and the poor man, which is commonly thought. And it is a kind proviſion of our all-Bountiful Creator, that to compenſate the diſadvantages of the poor, he commonly beſtows upon them the greateſt ſhare of the moſt ſubſtantial Comforts of Life (Health and Peace and Quiet, with Love, Friendſhip, Innocence and Contentment) and a ſweeter reliſh of its common bleſſings, than thoſe in higher ſtations ordinarily have. So that were we but juſtly to eſtimate the true value of our earthly Bleſſings, we ſhould ſee that we have abundant reaſon to be content with that portion of them

SERM. II.

which the divine Bounty hath been pleas'd to allot us.

5. Let us conſider the mutability of all earthly things, and the uncertainty of human Life. Are our circumſtances very depreſſed? they cannot be ſo long. All things under the moon are as variable as herſelf. Nature, in the revolution of the ſeaſons, exhibits to us a conſtant ſucceſſion of dark and lucid ſcenes: comfort ſoon returns after trouble, and joy after ſorrow; as the day ſucceeds the night, and the ſummer the winter. Not to ſay that the pinching Froſts of adverſity contribute no leſs to the health of our Souls, than the coldneſs of the winter does to the vigour and fertility of the Earth.

Laſtly, Let us often think of Eternity: in the view of which our preſent tranſient ſtate on Earth is but a moment, and dwindles into a Point. This ſentiment, render'd habitual, will ſoon rectify our miſtaken notions of Life, and make us more indifferent to all the ſhort tranſitory ſcenes of it. It will raiſe the mind ſuperior to all its momentary Joys and ſorrows, and make us look upon any condition of Life as happy,

that

that is connected with the hopes of everlaſting Bliſs. SERM. II.

Theſe are the ſeveral Springs from whence Contentment uſually flows. I proceed now to conſider

III. What we muſt do to attain it.

Now in order to this, there are two general directions laid down in the Text, of very ſingular and extenſive influence in this caſe; which I ſhall therefore more particularly conſider. And they are theſe

1. That we take care to root out of our Hearts all the Seeds of Covetouſneſs.

2. That we cultivate a firm Belief of, and a ſteady dependance on the divine Promiſes. *Let your converſation be without covetouſneſs, and be content with ſuch things as ye have; for he hath ſaid, I will never leave thee, nor forſake thee.*

1. That we take care to root out of our Hearts all the ſeeds of Covetouſneſs.

Covetouſneſs doth not conſiſt in the Poſſeſſion of wealth, but in the inordinate Love of it. And this exceſſive Love of money (the Apoſtle tell us) *is the root of all evil.* There are few vices but what may either

SERM. II.

immediately or remotely be traced up to this bitter Source. And none more viſibly than that of Diſcontent; of which it is the immediate Parent. And how it comes to paſs that this vice, ſo big with guilt, and ſo fruitful of every other iniquity ſhould paſs for a venial tranſgreſſion, and eſcape the juſt odium due to its nature, and meet with a more partial indulgence than many others of much leſs Guilt, is, one of the greateſt myſteries in Morals. The reaſon I apprehend, is, becauſe it lies concealed both from our own eye, and that of others: and when any Symptoms of it appear, they are readily palliated by falſe or fictitious names. But the following Criteria or marks will preſently diſcover it.

A man is then covetous when he has no heart to enjoy the Bounties of providence, or to furniſh himſelf with conveniencies ſuitable to his Condition.

When he has no heart to do good with them, or to relieve the neceſſities of the indigent in proportion to his plenty.

When he hath recourſe to unworthy or unlawful means to mend his circumſtances; or violates the obligations of Conſcience for the

ſake

ſake of worldly advantage. This ſhows that he ſets too great a value upon his money by far; becauſe he prefers it to his own Soul.

When his Heart is tortured and tormented at any worldly diſappointment or loſs: or when any ſuch detriment to his ſecular affairs robs him of his peace of mind, and renders him incapable of injoying the Comforts, or attending the Duties of Life.

When he puts his confidence in, and ſets his heart upon his wealth, as his happineſs; and finds a greater pleaſure in amaſsing it, than applying it to laudable and beneficent purpoſes.

Laſtly. When he is proud of his wealth; and deſpiſes others purely for the want of that ſhare of it which he poſſeſſes. Theſe are all ſure ſigns of Avarice; the Streams that flow directly from that corrupt fountain.

Now from theſe genuine effects of Covetouſneſs, and the oppoſition in which it ſtands to Contentment in the Text, we learn theſe three things.

1. That 'ere we can obtain this great happineſs of Chriſtian Contentment, we muſt root out all the ſeeds of Covetouſneſs from

SERM. II.

from our Hearts: for they will certainly ſpring up into anxiety, trouble and diſcontent.

2. That all this ariſes from ſetting too great a value on our earthly Comforts or worldly Bleſſings. We deſire them more than we ought, becauſe we rate them at more than they are worth.

3. That the true ground of contentment is to moderate our deſires and averſions with regard to all earthly things: to form a right eſtimate of them; not to dread the evil, or deſire the good things of the preſent Life too much; but to rectify the miſtakes of imagination and cuſtom by looking into the true nature of theſe things; ſtripping them of their falſe appearances; viewing them in their genuine emptineſs; and conſidering their confeſſed inſufficiency and diſadvantages in a thouſand circumſtances of Life; bringing them to the Touchſtone of mortality, and comparing them with eternal things. And unleſs we do this, and make theſe kind of contemplations habitual to us, we ſhall never long retain our ſelf-poſſeſſion, but often find our inward peace interrupted. So neceſſary is it that *our converſation*

ſation in this world *be without Covetouſneſs*, if we would be *content with ſuch things as we have*. Since nothing is a more certain and fruitful ſource of diſcontent than worldly-mindedneſs.

2. The next thing our Text directs us to, in order to attain this great bleſſing of a contented mind is to cultivate a firm belief of, and a ſteady Dependance on the divine Promiſes.

To one of theſe the Apoſtle eſpecially directs our thoughts; *for he hath ſaid, I will never leave thee, nor forſake thee.* A more comprehenſive promiſe is not to be found in the whole Book of GOD. Nor can there be conceived a more ſolid ground of content and thankfulneſs: for what can that man want, or what diſtreſs and danger in Life can terrify or diſcontent him, that hath this full aſſurance of the preſent ſupport and favour of almighty GOD? And to encourage our truſt in this Promiſe, it is delivered with the ſtrongeſt aſſeveration that can be expreſſed in ſo few words: for in the Greek there is no leſs than five negatives, the force of which is intirely loſt in our tranſlation, which may be rendered more agreably to the

SERM. II.

the emphaſis of the original thus; *No, I will not leave thee, no, no, I will never forſake thee (a).*

This promiſe was originally made to *Joſhua*, when upon the death of *Moſes* he ſucceeded to the command and conduct of the *Iſraelites*; and was given him for his encouragement at his entering upon that difficult office (*b*). But that its reference was not confined to him, but extended to all the people and ſervants of GOD in ſimilar circumſtances, appears from hence; becauſe the Apoſtle in the Text directs the Chriſtians to whom he writes, to apply it to themſelves for the ſupport of their faith, and a motive to contentment in every ſtate of Life. And if it was their Duty to apply it to this purpoſe, it is no leſs ours.

And this is a circumſtance that is well worth our attention. The great difficulty which Chriſtians meet with in this caſe (the proper uſe of the Promiſes) lies here: 'How do I know that they 'belong to me; or that I have a right 'to apply them for my comfort? did I 'know that I had a title to them, I could 'act

(*a*) ἐ μή σε ἀνῶ ὐδ' ἐ μή σε ἐγκαταλίπω:
(*b*) Joſh. i. 5.

SERM. II.

'act faith upon them; and admit the con-
'ſolation they are deſigned to convey: but
'if they are not made to me (as I am not
'ſure they are) that belief is preſumption.'
—Now to this I anſwer; They are not made to the obſtinate and impenitently wicked, to be ſure; but to all the Servants and Children of GOD in general, and for the ſupport and comfort of weak, feeble, and doubting Chriſtians in particular: and therefore they do in a more eſpecial manner belong to you. The Apoſtle tells the *Hebrew* Chriſtians, that this gracious Promiſe did belong to them: and exhorts them to apply it to themſelves, as the greateſt motive and encouragement to contentment; though ſome of them were very weak, both in grace and knowledge. Now can you ſuppoſe you have not as good a right to it as they had? And therefore to apply it to yourſelves, is ſo far from being Preſumption, that not to do ſo is Unbelief. And when by an active Faith on this and ſuch like Promiſes, you attain an habitual dependance on the Care and Providence of your heavenly Father, you will never want any other motive to Contentment.

Having

SERM. II.

Having thus conſider'd the two directions in the Text, in order to attain this happineſs of a contented ſpirit, I proceed now to add to them a few more. And

3. Frequently repair to thoſe ſources from whence Contentment ſprings. Endeavour therefore by all means to cultivate the virtue of Humility; a conſtant ſenſe of GOD's particular Providence, that directs and overrules all your concerns and intereſts: often recollect the divine bounty and goodneſs to you, in all the paſt ſcenes and ſtages of Life: look into the true nature of things, and ſuffer not your judgment to be biaſſed by prejudice and cuſtom: and often think of the uncertainty of Life, the near approach of Death, and the awfulneſs of Eternity.

4. Recollect how many mercies you enjoy, both temporal and ſpiritual; and ſet a juſt value upon them; and conſider how miſerable you would think yourſelf without them.

One great ground of diſcontent is, that men are more apt to look at what they have not, than at what they have. Not conſidering, that He who diſtributes theſe things in the wiſeſt manner, knows that thoſe things they

they have, are better for them than thoſe they would have; and more conducive to their true intereſt. SERM. II.

As for ſpiritual mercies, Providence has caſt your Lot in a chriſtian Country: you are born in a Proteſtant land, where you are permitted to worſhip GOD according to your conſciences; you have the Bible, the Records of eternal truth open to you, in your own Language; have been early taught to read it, and have many Helps to underſtand it: you are permitted ſtatedly to attend the publick Ordinances of GOD, that you may be further inſtructed in the Chriſtian Faith, directed in the chriſtian walk, improved in the chriſtian Temper, and eſtabliſhed in the chriſtian Hope. And, more than all this, you have the gracious aids and influence of the holy Spirit; to warn you of Sin, aſſiſt you in Duty, comfort your Minds, ſtrengthen your Souls, and be your *preſent help in every time of need.* Now reverſe theſe priviledges. Should you not have been really unhappy had you been born a blinded *Jew*, a deluded *Turk*, a ſavage *Indian*, or a bigotted *Papiſt*?—Nay, even among Proteſtants, do you not look upon them as very miſerable

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rable, who have been brought up in a total Ignorance of GOD, Religion, and a future State; educated under the influence of the worſt Examples, and thereby ſeduced into the greateſt Vices, and a fatal ſecurity in them, hardned by a long courſe of Sin? And take the whole collective Body of mankind, and the greateſt part of them by far belong to one or other of thoſe Claſſes I before mentioned. And few, very few in proportion, enjoy thoſe ſingular and diſtinguiſhing advantages for their eternal happineſs which you are favour'd with. O, what reaſon have you then, upon this view of things, to be not only content but thankful!

And as for temporal Mercies, how many do you ſee every day whoſe circumſtances are ſtreighter than yours, and who would be thankful for the bleſſings you are not content with? To learn Humility, we ſhould be often looking at thoſe who excell us: to learn Contentment, we ſhould be often looking at thoſe below us.—And if Providence hath appointed you a very ſmall portion of ſome earthly Comforts, in compariſon of what you ſee the rich enjoy, he hath given

given you many others, for which perhaps the very perſons you envy do as much envy you: *viz.* Health, Peace, Safety, and a quiet poſſeſſion and ſweet enjoyment of the little you have: which contribute more to the real Happineſs of Life than all thoſe extraneous advantages by which ſome may ſhine above you.

And if to a contented mind you can add the happineſs of an approving Conſcience, your condition is much preferable to that of thoſe who poſſeſs the greateſt outward affluence without this inward peace. Contentment itſelf is Gain, But *Godlineſs with contentment is great Gain (c).*

I ſhall now conclude all with two reflections by way of application.

1. There is but one ſtate of Life in which men ought not to be content: and yet that is the only one in which they generally are. You will eaſily imagine that what I here mean is a ſtate of ſin and guilt; while the ſoul is at enmity with, and unreconciled to GOD. This is that ſtate in which, one would think, no one can be content; unleſs he is content to be for ever miſerable. And

(c) 1 Tim. vi. 6.

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yet (it is dreadful to ſay) how many do we ſee who are not only content, but well pleaſed, ſatisfied, and in their own opinion happy, in this the moſt deplorable condition a human creature can be in, on this ſide Hell! To a ſerious and thinking mind there can ſcarce be exhibited a more melancholy and ſhocking ſcene than this: *viz.* a multitude of immortal Souls, without the leaſt apprehenſion of danger, dancing, jocund and gay, on the very brink of the infernal Gulf! A number of blind and drunken men, revelling, fearleſs on the edge of a Precipice, from which they ſucceſſively fall and periſh, without leaving the leaſt impreſſion on thoſe who but a little while ſurvive the ſame fate, is not an Image of ſo much Horror. Contentment in this caſe, is founded in the utmoſt ſtupidity, and want of thought: and is indeed the height of madneſs. And, O, how often are we ſhocked with this ſad ſight in this mad World!

Such are the effects of ſinful Habits, and a prevailing ſenſuality. They intoxicate like a doſe of Opium, and make a man contented, no otherwiſe than that they deprive him of the power of right thought. So that while

while he is under the moſt dangerous Diſtemper he all the while thinks himſelf not only well but happy. If there be any one Soul here in this wretched condition, give me leave to ſay, that it is yours *not* to be content. You have no right to one eaſy, peaceful, or pleaſing thought, (whatever your outward condition be) untill, by a ſincere repentance, and amendment of Life, you have ſome good ground to hope that GOD through *Jeſus Chriſt* is your reconciled Friend.

2. My other reflection is this, that as there is no ſtate of Life in which a wicked man ought to be content, ſo there is no ſituation in which a good man may not. For what cauſe can that man have for Diſcontent, who hath good ground to hope that his heaven is ſecure. It was this which taught the Apoſtle *Paul* contentment in whatever ſtate he was (*d*); and not only ſo, but rais'd his mind ſuperior to all he ſuffered, and made him *rejoice in tribulation*. See his Triumph in that well known paſſage, *Rom.* viii. 35. *Who ſhall ſeparate us from the Love of Chriſt?* (the foundation of his eternal

(*d*) Phil. iv. 2.

SERM. II.

nal hope) *ſhall tribulation, or diſtreſs, or perſecution, or famine, or nakedneſs, or peril, or ſword? nay in all theſe things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us.*

Thoſe circumſtances of Life in which men are moſt apt to be diſcontent are theſe; Bodily pains and afflictions long continued, poverty and diſtreſs, the malevolence and contempt of men, undeſerved reproach and infamy, a ſituation of danger, or wherein we apprehend ſome great approaching and unavoidable difficulties, the loſs of Friends, or diſappointments in our worldly affairs. But now, put all theſe together, and throw them into the Ballance againſt the Chriſtians *bleſſed Hope*, and how light do they appear! Under the united preſſure of all theſe Calamities (which to a worldly mind are ſo unſupportably grievous) A Chriſtian's well eſtabliſhed Hope may make him not only content but joyful: while his Faith ardently looks at *that glory which ſhall be reveal'd; that far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory*, with which all his ſufferings on earth are not *worthy to be compared.*

The

The HYMN.

I.

GOD is my portion, all my good
From his rich mercy flows;
And his good providence ſecures
The bleſſings he beſtows.

II.

I envy not the great man's ſtate,
Nor pine to ſee his ſtore;
With what I have I'm pleaſed much
With what I hope for more.

III.

Then let me make the Lord my truſt,
And practiſe all that's good;
So ſhall I dwell among the juſt,
And He'll provide me food.

IV.

I charge my thoughts, be humble ſtill,
And all my carriage mild,
Content, my father, with thy will,
And quiet as a child.

V.

The meek at laſt the earth poſſeſs,
They are the Heirs of Heaven;
True riches with abundant peace
To humble ſouls are given.

SER-

SERMON III.

Of PATIENCE.

JAMES i. 4.

But let patience have her perfect work; that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

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THE third part of the Chriſtian Temper, as it conſiſts in the exerciſe of the human Virtues, is *Patience*. She is the daughter of Humility, and the ſiſter of Contentment, whom ſhe inſeparably attends; and to both which ſhe bears a near reſemblance. She hath all the meekneſs of her Mother, and the ſweetneſs of her Siſter. She is often afflicted but never diſcompoſed. Sorrow ſits decently upon her: ſhe gives a grace to her ſufferings; and ſmiles in tears.

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Like the moon ſhe is ever calm and ſerene, and ſhines brighteſt in the night.*

In diſcourſing on this part of the Chriſtian temper I ſhall

I. Offer to you ſome general Obſervations relating to it. Then

II. More particularly conſidered it in its various views and modifications.

I. I ſhall offer to you ſome general Obſervations relating to it.

1. Chriſtian patience is eſſentially different from Inſenſibility; whether natural, artificial, or acquired. This ſometimes paſſeth for patience, though it be really quite another thing: for *Patience* ſignifies *ſuffering*. Now if you inflict ever ſo much pain upon the Body of another, if he is not ſenſible of it, it is no pain to him: he ſuffers nothing, conſequently calmneſs under it is no patience.

This Inſenſibility is ſometimes *natural*. Some in the native temperament of their mind

* *Her meek hands folded on her modeſt Boſom,*
With mute ſubmiſſion, lifts the adoring Eye
Even to the ſtorm that wrecks her. Ogilvie.

mind and body are much leſs ſuſceptible of pain than others are. There are different degrees of inſenſibility in men, both in their animal and mental frame: ſo that the ſame event may be a great exerciſe of patience to one man, which is none at all to another: as the latter feels little or no pain from that wound, inflicted on the Body or mind, which gives the moſt exquiſite anguiſh to the former. But it is our comfort that he who perfectly knows our Frame, knows what we feel; and will not *ſuffer us to be tempted*, or tryed, *above what we are able to bear*. SERM. III.

Again, there is an *artificial* Inſenſibility: ſuch as is procured by opiates which blunt the edge of pain. And there is an *acquired* Inſenſibility, *viz.* that which is attained by the force of principles ſtrongly inculcated, or by long cuſtom. Such was the Apathy or Inſenſibility of the *Stoicks*; who obſtinately maintained that pain was no evil, and therefore bore it with amazing firmneſs: which, however, was ſomething very different from the virtue of Chriſtian patience: as appears from the principles from which they

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they reſpectively proceeded; the one ſpringing from Pride, the other from Humility.

Chriſtian Patience then is ſomething very different from all theſe. She is as ſenſible of pain or ſuffering as the moſt fretful Chriſtian can be: but bears it with meekneſs and temper, without complaint or murmuring.

2. Patience, under its moſt grievous preſſures, is greatly ſtrengthned by Faith, and ſupported by Hope. Faith ſupports it on one ſide, and Hope on the other. Hope turns the Eye of the mind to future Good, and brighter Scenes: and Faith gives it a clearer and ſtronger view of that Glory which Hope turns its Eye to, and repreſents it as incomparably and infinitely greater than all the ſufferings it can ſuſtain for the ſake of it, or in the way to it. *A far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* Without Faith and Hope there can be no Chriſtian Patience; whoſe ſtrength is always in proportion to that of its Supporters.

3. Patience is one of the moſt difficult parts of the Chriſtian temper, or one of the moſt ſelf-denying Virtues that Chriſtianity requires. I know but one in the whole ſcheme of Chriſtian Morals that is more hard

hard to be complied with; i. e. forgiveneſs of Injuries, or loving our Enemies (*a*). But the difficulty ariſes not from any thing in the virtue itſelf, (for the moſt perfect minds practiſe it with eaſe) but from the imbecility and corruption of our nature. However, the practice of it is indiſpenſably neceſſary to the quiet and peace of our minds, in the preſent circumſtances of our Being. And the fruits and benefits of patience, in all its modifications and forms, will abundantly compenſate the difficulties that attend its ſteady and uniform Practice. SERM. III.

4. There is no grace that we have more need of, or that we ſhall meet with more frequent occaſions for in our preſent imperfect ſtate, than this of Patience. There is not a day paſſes over our heads, but we meet with ſome events or occurrences which put it to the trial in one degree or other. And, like other habits, it is acquired by frequent exerciſe; and rendered eaſy by cuſtom.

(*a*) *Dion*, the diſciple of *Plato*, upon a certain occaſion ſaid, 'that he thought it as great a weakneſs to revenge 'an Injury as to commit one.' A marvellous ſentiment in a Heathen, who liv'd long before the world was enlighten'd by the chriſtian moral! See *Rollin*'s Belles Lettres, Ed. 2. Vol. 3. p. 351.

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tom. Hence it is that our Saviour ſo much inſiſts upon ſelf-denial, as a grand requiſite and qualification in all them who would become his Diſciples. Becauſe it was ſo neceſſary to the regular practice of ſeveral of thoſe Virtues in which the Chriſtian temper doth eſſentially conſiſt: and to none more than that of Patience. And hence alſo it is that in the preſent ſtate of our nature, ſelf denial is ſo univerſally neceſſary to a ſettled peace of Mind: becauſe it is ſo neceſſary to ſelf-Government, without which there can be no laſting ſelf-Enjoyment.

And not only our own imprefections, but the weakneſſes and failings of others, with whom we have natural or ſocial connexions, will furniſh us with frequent occaſions for the exerciſe of this moſt important paſſive virtue. And if in Education that Science ought to be eſpecially cultivated, which we ſhall have the moſt need of in future life; in Religion that temper and diſpoſition of mind ſhould be moſt carefully acquired and preſerved, which we are daily called to practiſe; and the practice of which will be attended with the greateſt

greateſt benefit and advantage in the religious Life and Conduct. SERM. III.

5. This grace of Patience, which I am now about to recommend to your diligent cultivation and practice, is a Divine as well as Human Virtue: and that of which the great GOD himſelf has ſet us the moſt perfect and amazing example, in his providential conduct towards us. And hence he is emphatically called *the GOD of patience (b)*. O, if we did but conſider how much patience the GOD of Heaven exerciſes towards us, every day and every hour we live; bearing with our ingratitude, provocations, and follies, ſurely we could want no other motive to bear with the infirmities, petulance and affronts of our fellow-Creatures and fellow-Sinners; who can never diſpleaſe us ſo much we are every day offending him! how can children be ſo thoughtleſs as to quarrel with one another, under the Eye of that gracious Father who forgives them all!

6. Though the greateſt advantages accrue from the regular exerciſe of this Chriſtian

(b) Rom xv. 5.

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Chriſtian Virtue, far ſuperior to the pains which the habitual practice of it may require, yet they all depend upon a ſteady perſeverance in it. If under any Tryal, either from the hand of GOD or man, our patience hath held out a conſiderable time, but is loſt at laſt; and gives place to paſſion, peeviſhneſs, fretful and indecent reſentments, we not only loſe all the Benefit of our paſt ſelf-denial and long-ſuffering, but incur all the bad effects and conſequences of an unreſtrained paſſion. And therefore you ſee the great ſtreſs in the Text is laid on perſeverance in this Virtue: *let Patience have her perfect work.*

This is remarkably exemplified in the caſe of *Job*; who is recorded in ſcripture as a man of the greateſt patience; and whom St *James* propoſed to us as the moſt eminent pattern of it. *You have heard of the patience of Job.* And indeed under all the vaſt complication of diſtreſs by which that good man was overwhelmed, no one could act with more meekneſs, reſignation and ſelf-poſſeſſion, than he did at firſt. *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away,*

bleſſed

bleſſed be the name of the Lord (a). But his *patience had not its perfect work.* We find him afterwards curſing the day of his birth, complaining of Life, and wiſhing for death, and charging GOD fooliſhly. And in ſhort diſcovering almoſt as much paſſion and peeviſhneſs as his wife. So that though he was not ſo guilty as he appeared in the eyes of his three Friends, yet he was more ſo than he ſeemed to be in his own. Which when the divine Majeſty condeſcended to make him ſenſible of, by a ſtrong and awful remonſtrance immediately from heaven, his Humility and Patience ſoon returned; not one more complaining word eſcaped him: But *behold I am vile; what ſhall I anſwer Thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth; once have I ſpoken, but I will not anſwer; yea twice, but I will proceed no further (b).* SERM. III.

Laſtly. I obſerve, that Patience (like Humility from whence it flows) notwithſtanding the meaneſs of its Garb, is of a noble extract and a certain mark of true greatneſs of Mind: i. e. when conſiderd as a virtue, and abſtracted from thoſe foreign aids, whether natural or artificial, I before mentioned.

(a) Job i. 21. (b) xl. 4, 5.

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II. I am now more particularly to open to you the true nature of this virtue, Patience, in its ſeveral different views and modifications

Patience is a complex term; applicable to various circumſtances and implying different operations of the mind. As patience in bearing; patience in forbearing; patience in waiting; and patience in perſevering.

Patience in bearing, is called *Magnanimity*. Patience in forbearing, is *Equanimity*; patience in waiting, *Longanimity*; and patience in perſevering, is *Conſtancy*. All inſtances of great ſelf-command, and true fortitude of ſpirit. And as we ſhall have frequent occaſion for the exerciſe of patience in each of theſe reſpects, I ſhall therefore give every one of them a diſtinct conſideration; and ſuggeſt to you the proper means of ſupporting it, as I proceed. Which will give you a clear and comprehenſive view of this Virtue, and at the ſame time prepare you for the Practice of it, as future occaſions ſhall offer.

1. The

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1. The firſt and moſt common ſenſe of the word patience is *bearing* the afflictions we are under, with a ſubmiſſive temper, ſo long as it ſhall pleaſe GOD to continue them. This is ſometimes called *long-ſuffering*: and is oppoſed to murmuring, fretfulneſs, or repining under the hand of GOD. In this ſenſe the word is uſed in the Text; where the Apoſtle exhorts us to let patience *have its perfect work*. Thus it is uſed (*Rom.* v. 3.) *Tribulation worketh patience* (*Rom.* xii. 12.) *Be patient in tribulation*. This latter place explains the former. What is there aſſerted as a priviledge, is here enjoined as a Duty. Our Troubles will never work Patience, unleſs we take care to behave in a right manner under them. They are the means which, by the bleſſing of GOD, often produce this effect; but then, like other means, they muſt be uſed in a proper manner. Patience in ſuffering, is known by a peaceful, quiet, compoſed, and contented frame of mind; and is otherwiſe called *Reſignation*, or *Submiſſion*. As a chriſtian virtue it ſprings from Faith; which looks beyond the preſent dark ſcene, or brightens it with the beams of Hope and heavenly Joy: and

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recurs to Prayer, and the conſolations of Scripture for its ſovereign ſupport.

Thoſe Trials in life which put this virtue to the moſt delicate proof are theſe. Acute pain, or long continued diſorder of Body; Family Affliction, and eſpecially the death of dear Friends; and great worldly Loſſes and Diſappointments. — Now for the ſupport of our Patience under ſuch afflicting Viſitations (beſides the means juſt now mentioned) the following conſiderations may be very uſeful.

That in every one of theſe calamitous ſituations, a patient ſpirit alleviates, but impatience aggravates the Diſtreſs. The former takes off half the load, the latter doubles it. Moſt of the Tribulations of life, men may charge to the account of their own Folly: and there is no folly by which a man more frequently becomes his own Tormentor than this of Impatience and Fretfulneſs.

Look upon every affliction (whatever it be) as coming by the direct appointment of GOD; as ſent by him: and not only ſo, but as ſent by him for your good. And if you are patient under it, you will ſoon have cauſe to be thankful for it. And

The

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The ſame afflictions are accompliſhed in your brethren which are upon the Earth. Yours is not a ſingular caſe: you have thouſands that are your fellow-ſufferers at the ſame inſtant: many of whom are preſſed down with much heavier burdens than yours; and would count themſelves comparatively happy, were they in your circumſtances. And indeed what is the whole World, but one grand Hoſpital of diſeaſed men? diſeaſed either in Body or Mind? But we need not look beyond the Ward we are in (the place where providence hath *fixed the bounds of our habitation*) to be witneſs to miſeries much greater than our own. But

2. We have need of patience, not only in *bearing*, but in *forbearing*. The former refers to the Afflictions we receive at the hand of GOD; this to the Injuries and Ill treatment we may meet with from the hands of men. This is called *Equanimity*; and is oppoſed to Paſſion or vindictive Reſentment. But as in the other caſe, patience does not render us inſenſible of the afflictions we receive from the hand of GOD, ſo neither in this, does it make us regardleſs

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of the Indignities we receive from men. As it does not torpify the fleſh, ſo neither does it ſtupify the ſpirit: but keeps the mind even, compoſed, and calm, under both. In this ſenſe the word is uſed, (1 *Theſſ.* v. 14.) *be patient towards all men.*

And not only the injuſtice and affronts of our enemies, but the follies, fickleneſs, and indiſcretion of our Friends, may ſometimes put this kind of Patience to a very painful proof. And eſpecially the Miſconduct of any who are intimately related to us, or connected with us.

Now to encourage and ſupport this exerciſe of our Patience,

Let us often think of our own miſconduct, imprudence, and follies; and how much we ſtand in need of the forgiveneſs and lenity of others. And, according to the golden rule, remember to mete out to others, that meaſure we ſhould be glad to receive from them: and not be more ſevere upon their failings, than we would chuſe they ſhould be upon ours. Which is what our Saviour himſelf expreſſly requires of us, when he commands us *to do to others* (in all caſes and in this more particularly)

cularly) *that which we would they ſhould do to us.* SERM. III.

When we are moved or irritated by any juſt occaſion of offence, let us give room to this Reflection; that however the offender is to blame, yet he is, for certain, not ſo guilty as we then imagine him to be. Becauſe the mind, under ſuch a ferment, is not capable of judging aright concerning the true nature of the offence. Anger and Reſentment have thrown a ſtrong Biaſs on the mind; that it can ſee things only in one light, look only on one ſide; and aggravates every circumſtance that enhances the fault, and ſuppreſſes every thing that might diminiſh it. How is it poſſible then that, in ſuch a temper and ſituation, it ſhould be able to form a right judgment?

Again, Let us recollect our Chriſtian obligations to this Duty of forbearance: and how neceſſarily our Saviour hath made the Forgiveneſs we expect from GOD, to depend upon that we extend to men: who expreſsly tells us, that his Father will on no other terms extend it to us. *If you forgive not men their treſpaſſes, neither will your Father in Heaven forgive you your treſpaſſes.*

Laſtly. Let us think of the Patience of GOD; and how much he bears with us, who ſtand infinitely more in need of his Forgiveneſs, than any of our Fellow-creatures can of ours. To proceed

3. There is another branch of Patience, which conſiſts in quietly waiting for any deſired Bleſſing, until ſuch a time as GOD ſhall pleaſe to ſend it. This is called *Longanimity:* and is oppoſed to that uneaſy, diſcontented ſpirit, which we are apt to diſcover when ſome wiſhed-for good is delay'd; or ſome ardent Hope diſappointed. *Solomon* ſays, *Hope deferred makes the heart ſick (c)*; i. e. creates an inward pain and anxiety. An effect it often has upon perſons of a peeviſh ſpirit. In oppoſition to which, Patience (in this application of the word) ſignifies waiting with a quiet, calm, compoſed temper of mind, till the deſired Bleſſing come. In this ſenſe we often find the word uſed in the new Teſtament, *If we hope for that we ſee not, then do we with patience wait for it (d). For you have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of* GOD,

(c) Prov. xiii. 12. (d) Rom. vi. 25.

GOD, *ye might receive the promiſes* (*e*). *Be patient therefore, Brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the Huſbandman waiteth for the precious fruits of the Earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain* (*f*). *The Lord direct your heart into the Love of* GOD, *and patient waiting for Chriſt.* Which ſhould rather be render'd, the *Patience of Chriſt* (*g*). SERM. III.

The exerciſe of this kind of Patience is neceſſary, both in waiting for a deliverance from ſome preſent Evil we mourn under, and for the poſſeſſion of ſome future Good we hope for. And the trial of our Patience in each of theſe circumſtances, will be in proportion to the greatneſs of the affliction we are under and deſire to be deliver'd from; and the value of the Bleſſing we want, and wait to be put in poſſeſſion of. And to fortify your Patience, in waiting for the Bleſſing you ſo much deſire, remember

The longer it is deferred, the ſweeter it will be when it comes. Ardent Deſire will heighten the Reliſh of it, and make you more thankful for it. Nay

(*e*) Heb. x. 36. (*f*) Jam. v. 7.
(*g*) εἰς ὑπομονὴν τοῦ χριστοῦ. 2 Theſſ. iii. 5.

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This patient waiting for it may anticipate it, and make it come the ſooner. Whereas an Impatient Temper may be the reaſon it is ſo long delayed. The beſt way to have afflictions ſoon removed, is to be humble and ſubmiſſive under them; and the beſt way to be put into the enjoyment of any deſired Bleſſing, is to reſign ourſelves wholly to GOD; and to be perfectly eaſy and contented, till he is pleaſed to ſend it.

Laſtly. Much Patience is ſometimes required in perſevering with ſteadineſs and *Conſtancy* in the proſecution of ſome wiſe and good End, through the dangers that beſet, or difficulties that obſtruct us in it.—Now this may refer either

To the great end of Life in general: which to a wiſe man is Religion, or a regular Improvement in grace and virtue; as the only thing that can eſtabliſh his peace, and promote his Comfort and Uſefulneſs in this world, and ſecure his Happineſs in the other. Patience then, in this ſenſe of the word, is a ſteady perſeverance in the way of all known Duty, without being weary in it, diverted from it, or fainting under the difficulties we may meet with therein. Or

It

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It may refer to any particular Purſuit, or laudable Purpoſe in Life: which if it be conſiderable and important, can rarely be effected without much pains, patience and perſeverance. For the moſt hopeful beginnings and the moſt vigorous efforts diſcontinued, will be unſucceſsful. But pains, patience, and perſeverance conquer all things.

To excite us to a patient perſeverance in both theſe caſes, let us recollect

That nothing can be brought to a happy Iſſue without it. A Traveller had as well never ſet forward on his Journey, as ſit down and give out before he hath got to the end of it. A Soldier can never be victorious if, fatigued with two or three Skirmiſhes, he declines any further labour of watching and fighting, before he hath accompliſhed his warfare. So in the chriſtian warfare, only they who, by a *patient continuance in well doing, ſeek for glory honour and immortality*, ſhall receive *eternal Life*. (*b*) Beſides,

For want of patient perſeverance, we not only fail of our End, but loſe all our paſt Labour: all the care and pains and ſelf-denial

(*b*) *Rom.* xi. 7.

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nial we ſubmitted to, and perſevered ſo long in, are loſt, unleſs by the help of patience we continue to perſevere. And not to do ſo, is a folly that borders upon madneſs. So it appeared to Saint *Paul* who very warmly upbraided the backſliding *Galatians* with it. *O fooliſh Galatians, who hath bewitch'd you, that you ſhould not obey the truth? ye did run well, who did hinder ye? are ye ſo fooliſh, having begun in the ſpirit, are ye now made perfect in the fleſh? have ye ſuffer'd ſo many things in vain? if it be yet in vain (c).* Beſides

The longer we perſevere in any good courſe, the leſs Exerciſe ſhall we have for our patience: becauſe the fewer difficulties ſhall we meet with to try it. For Cuſtom makes every difficult courſe eaſy, and every virtuous way delightful. So that the patience that is at firſt required to proſecute it, in time turns into pleaſure; which more then compenſates all the pains of perſeverance.

With ſuch conſiderations as theſe ſhould we fortify and encourage our minds, that our perſevering patience may *have its perfect work.*

And

(c) *Gal.* iii. 1.

And thus much for the third part of the Chriſtian temper, *Patience*. Which I have now been endeavouring diſtinctly to illuſtrate, and recommend to you, in its ſeveral views and relations.

It is a Virtue in which our divine Maſter hath ſet us the moſt ſhining Example. Whoſe patience was invincible, and triumphed over all the malice of his Perſecutors. I beſeech you then (as the Apoſtle *Paul* did the *Corinthians*) *by the meekneſs and gentleneſs of Chriſt*, let us all endeavour to be like him, by imitating him more and more in this God-like quality. And thus ſhall we better adorn his Religion and our Characters as Chriſtians, than we can by all the moſt ſhining acquiſitions without it.

It is a Virtue peculiar to a ſtate of ſuffering and imperfection; and which we ſhall have no more occaſion for when we are got out of this World. But while we are in it, we ſhall have frequent need of this Chriſtian temper to lighten our loads, compoſe our minds, and help us to behave with decency in, and derive laſting benefit and advantage from, the various ſorrows, ſufferings, pains, and

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and tribulations we muſt paſs through *before we enter into the Kingdom of* GOD. The enſuing week will very probably furniſh us with many a diſagreeable Incident, wherein it will be neceſſary to call patience to our Aid. For few days paſs over our heads, without ſome trial of it, in ſome kind and degree or other. Whenever we are called to the exerciſe of it then, let us ſee to it that it *have its perfect work:* and let us make that part of the Chriſtian temper which hath been ſo particularly recommended to us this day, the object of our attention and practice every day the enſuing week. And thus *to be doers of the word* as we hear it, is the way to be wiſe and well-eſtabliſhed Chriſtians, and *bleſſed in our Deeds.*—But that I may not put the virtue I recommend to an unneceſſary trial, I add no more; but my hearty prayer that the Bleſſing of God may attend what has now been ſaid, and his Grace aſſiſt us all in the future Practice of it.

THE

The HYMN.

I.

GOD of my Life look gently down,
Behold the pains I feel;
But I am dumb before thy throne,
Nor dare diſpute thy will.

II.

Diſeaſes are thy ſervants, Lord,
They come at thy command;
I'll not attempt a murmuring word
Againſt thy chaſtening hand.

III.

The patient ſoul, the lowly mind
Shall have a large reward:
Let ſaints in ſorrow lie reſign'd,
And truſt a faithful GOD.

IV.

Tis GOD that lifts my comforts high,
Or ſinks 'em in the grave:
He gives, and (bleſſed be his name)
He takes but what he gave.

V.

Peace all my angry paſſions then
Let each rebellious ſigh
Be ſilent at his ſovereign will,
And every murmur die.

VI.

If ſmiling Mercy crown my life,
It's praiſes ſhall be ſpread;
And I'll adore the Juſtice too
That ſtrikes my Comforts dead.

SER-

SERMON IV.

Of PRUDENCE.

PROV. xiv. 15.

A prudent man looketh well to his Going.

THE next Chriſtian virtue that falls under our conſideration is *Prudence*. Let it not be thought ſtrange that I reckon Prudence in the rank of the Chriſtian virtues; ſince Imprudence not only leads to, but is of itſelf one of the greateſt Vices: which you will preſently ſee if you carefully attend to what will be deliver'd in the proſecution of this Subject. Wherein I ſhall SERM. IV.

I. Particularly ſhew you what Prudence is.

II. Open

SERM. IV.

II. Open to you the Importance of it; relative to our ſocial and religious Character. And then

Laſtly. Inforce the practice of it from thoſe Conſiderations,

I. I am particularly to ſhew you what prudence is.

Prudence is a conformity to the rules of Reaſon, Truth, and Decency, at all times, and in all circumſtances. This is a general definition of Prudence, applicable to every caſe wherein we are called to the practice of it. A notorious and habitual tranſgreſſion of thoſe Rules, is downright Wickedneſs; ſmall and occaſional deviations from them is Imprudence: a conſtant habitual conformity to them, is wiſdom; and a general practical regard to them, is Prudence.

From this definition of Prudence then we learn wherein it differs from Wiſdom; *(viz)* only in degree: Wiſdom being nothing but a higher degree or more confirmed habit of Prudence; and Prudence, a lower degree or weaker habit of Wiſdom.

Hence

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Hence Wiſdom and Prudence are often put to ſignify the ſame thing; or uſed as equivalent terms: as are alſo Imprudence and Folly; which differ from each other juſt in the ſame manner.

Prudence appears hence not only to be a Virtue, but to be the moſt extenſive of all Virtues; for there can be no virtue without it. By this all the reſt are to be regulated and directed. There are few Virtues but what, for want of prudence, may be carried to an exceſs; by which means they change their nature, and degenerate into Vice. Hence the character of a certain romantick Prince, given by a no leſs romantick Writer, was, 'That he had but one Vice; and that was, his carrying all the virtues to an extreme *(b)*'

From this definition of prudence it further appears, that it lies chiefly in preſerving a conduct conſiſtent with our circumſtances in Life; and ſuitable to the character we do, or ought to maintain in it For every one ſees that a conduct inconſiſtent with character is in every man the height of Impru-

(b) Voltaire's Life of *Charles* xii.

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dence; *i. e.* downright Folly. The ſame Action may be prudent in one man, that is not ſo in another; nay which would be very imprudent, very wrong, and fooliſh in another: becauſe it may be ſuitable to the character and circumſtances of the firſt, but not of the laſt.

Again, not only the difference of character and circumſtances may render the ſame action prudent or imprudent in different perſons; but the difference of times and ſeaſons may make the ſame action prudent or imprudent in the ſame perſon. For there are few things that are equally right, reaſonable, and becoming at all times. Therefore the prudence or imprudence of an action does not ariſe ſo much from the action itſelf, as from the character of the perſon that does it, or from the circumſtances that attend it.

Theſe ſhort ſtrictures may ſerve to give us a general Idea of the nature and extent of this virtue of prudence. But to have a more full and diſtinct notion of it, it will be neceſſary to mention ſome of its general principles, or ſpecify ſeveral inſtances of it, that are applicable both to the civil and religious Life, in order to ſhew its vaſt importance

tance in both. Theſe will diſcover to us the various inſtances of folly that abound in the World, which I ſhall take notice of, as I proceed, for our caution. And SERM. IV.

1. One of the firſt Principles of prudence is, for a man to ſecure his moſt important Intereſt firſt. Now in order to this three things are neceſſary.

1. To know what his moſt important Intereſt is;

2. By what means it may be ſecured;

3. A ſteady perſeverance in the uſe of thoſe means.

A deficiency in any one of theſe will defeat our End. For if a man doth not know wherein his true intereſt conſiſts; or if he knows it, does not know the means to attain it; or if he does, will not uſe thoſe means, it is impoſſible he ſhould attain his end, if his true intereſt be what he aims at.

Now in this view how much folly appears to abound in the world! Many miſtake their true intereſt, and purſue that for it which is not only alien from, but oppoſite to it: as worldly and wicked men who ſeek their chief happineſs from outward pleaſures and animal gratifications. Others who know

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their true intereſt, miſtake the means to ſecure it: as the ſuperſtitious man, who ſeeks to obtain the favour of GOD and final happineſs, by means which have nothing of Religion in them. Others who know that the way to happineſs is only by an habitual practice of Religion and Virtue, yet continue all their lives in the neglect of it: as Formaliſts and Hypocrites.

2. Prudence always directs us to diſpatch the moſt important Buſineſs firſt. When we are urged and preſſed by a multiplicity of affairs, and only one can be minded at a time, we ſhould always begin with that which is moſt neceſſary: that whatever happens to be neglected or omitted, *that* may not. This is a good rule, applicable to our worldly affairs; and with equal propriety to our ſpiritual. Our moſt important Buſineſs every day, is doubtleſs the worſhip of GOD; or to pay the devotion of our hearts to the Author of our Being. With this then ſhould every day begin; and with the ſame ſhould it end. And if the Beginning and End of every day be ſacred to GOD, it will have a very happy influence on the intermediate tranſactions of it.

By

By this Principle of Prudence we detect another very fruitful ſource of folly, among the multitude who live without GOD in the world; and look upon their earthly affairs as what claim their firſt and chief concern. SERM. IV.

3. *A prudent man looks well to his going.* (i. e.) Not only attends the Duties of his character and ſtation with circumſpection, but looks forward to the conſequences of things; and particularly of the Conduct which he ſtatedly allows himſelf in: and not only to the immediate, but the remote conſequences of his actions: not only to the certain, but probable conſequences. O, how much miſchief and miſery might be avoided or prevented, by attending only to this ſingle principle of prudence! for what are moſt of the calamities we ſee in the world owing to but this; that men will not look before them? will not look far enough before them; and model and govern their lives, by a ſteady view to the final Iſſue! To the want of this wiſe foreſight *Moſes* attributed all the rebellions and enormities of the Jewiſh people: and therefore breathed forth this ardent prayer on their behalf; O,

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that they were wiſe, that they underſtood this, that they would conſider their latter end (c).

4. Another univerſal principle of Prudence is this, ever to prefer the dictates of Reaſon to thoſe of Appetite. Or in other words, when Inclination and Fancy draw one way, and Judgment and Conſcience another (as we too often find they do) ſteadily to purſue the Lead of the latter. This contraſt of Inclination to Conſcience, or this rebellion of Appetite againſt Reaſon, ariſes purely from the depravation of our nature, and is a ſtanding monument of it. Were our minds under no moral Obliquity, we ſhould have no biaſs to draw us out of the right way of Duty: but the dictates of Inclination and Judgment would be the ſame; would direct both one way; and that always the right. But as the contrary is too apparently the caſe, it is now become the moſt indiſpenſible part of Prudence, to keep a conſtant guard over our Appetites and Inclinations; that we be not by an irregular, exceſſive, or unſeaſonable indulgence of them, drawn aſide into tranſgreſſion. And, O, what guilt and wretchedneſs do we ſee abound

(c) Deut. xxxii. 29.

abound among thoſe men, who will not permit their Reaſon to lay the due reſtraint on Appetite! SERM. IV.

5. Prudence teaches us to keep out of the way of Temptation. Becauſe ſuch is the inequality between the corrupt and virtuous principle in our heart, or ſuch the diſparity between the ſtrength of our ſpiritual Enemies and our own, that it is much ſafer to decline than hazard a Battle. How many Sins and Follies ariſe from the contrary inſtance of imprudence! from perſons ruſhing ſecure and defenceleſs into the moſt dangerous temptations, and to the utmoſt verge of what they think is lawful! when, perhaps, their corrupt imaginations may have already removed the Bounds of virtue far into the Borders of vice. Whereas it is always prudent to keep at a diſtance from, and to avoid the very appearance of Evil: *leaſt the good we have, be evil ſpoken of.*

6. Another very important principle of Prudence is, meekly to bear with the miſtakes, infirmities, and miſconduct of others. Innumerable miſchiefs ariſe from a ſower, rigid, narrow, and cenſorious ſpirit: which diſcovers much Ignorance, more Malevo-

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lence, but moſt Pride; and excites endleſs Animoſities, and Diſcontent among thoſe whoſe hearts ought to be *perfectly knit together in Love.* There is more prudence and virtue in Charity, and more folly and ſin in a bigotted condemning temper than many are aware of: which evidently appears from the conſequences of both. A prudent man will neither give nor take unneceſſary offence. A Fool is ever full of confidence and conceit; and while he is blind to his own miſtakes and failings, gives no quarter to thoſe of others. I ſhall mention but one principle of Prudence more (viz.)

Laſtly. To attend to the true nature of things, ſeparate from their falſe appearances; and to proportion our regards to their intrinſic Importance. This is a univerſal Rule, and of moſt extenſive influence; and to the neglect of it we may trace up almoſt all the Follies and abſurdities that abound in the World. Men take up with falſe notions of things, and that engages them in wrong purſuits. And the reaſon their Judgments are ſo often impoſed upon is, they either receive their Notions at ſecond hand from others, or from the firſt outward and ſuperficial

ficial appearance of things, or under the biaſs of paſſion, intereſt, or cuſtom; without taking the pains to examine into their true nature and conſequences. And hence it is that we are ſo apt to over-value earthly things, and under-rate thoſe that are eternal: only becauſe we ſee almoſt every body elſe do the ſame; and becauſe theſe things are preſent and ſubject to our ſenſes, but eternal things future and inviſible; and have nothing but their own undoubted importance to attract and engage our attention. But the importance of them is ſo great, that it is not only Imprudence, but the height of Madneſs to neglect and diſregard them. SERM. IV.

He then that would *look well to his goings*, muſt be regularly influenced, and ſteadily governed, by theſe principles and rules of Prudence. Which when once wrought into a uniform Habit and Practice, will be of more eſſential ſervice to us than the moſt perfect acquaintance with the whole circle of Sciences without them.

II. I am now to lay before you the importance of this Virtue, both in the ſocial and religious character; or ſhew you the influence

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influence it hath both in the civil and ſpiritual Life.

1. In civil life. And here we find it diffuſes a moſt happy and extenſive influence. For

1. It renders a man, tho' of ſmall abilities, one of the moſt uſeful and reſpectable Members of Society: while others of greater parts, for want of common prudence, become the bane and miſchief of it. And, indeed, the more talents a proud and fooliſh man hath, the more harm he is capable of doing by the proſtitution of them. There is not a worſe Member of Society than a man of learning, wealth, and power, who hath no Prudence to direct thoſe Talents to any uſeful purpoſe; but a bad heart, that prompts him to pervert them to the injury of himſelf and others. This we have ſometimes ſeen ourſelves, and often read of. Unleſs Prudence have the direction of all our powers, our Paſſions will; under whoſe guidance, they will ſoon grow as wild and rampant as themſelves.

Whereas on the other hand, Prudence not only turns our Paſſions out of their precedence

cedence (for their place is to go behind and not before) but takes the Lead of them: and, like a General at the head of his Army, only calls them in as her troops, to enforce and vigorouſly execute the meaſures ſhe has wiſely concerted. SERM. IV.

Prudence firſt puts a man upon conſidering, in what manner he may be moſt uſeful in that ſtation of life he is in; and how he may beſt employ the Powers he hath (be they more or leſs) to his own advantage, and the good of others. And thus by a wiſe and right application of a few Talents, he does much more good in the World, and becomes a more valuable member of Society, than another who hath much greater Abilities, but either neglects or miſapplies them. Beſides

2. Prudence is neceſſary to the ſucceſsful management of our ſecular affairs. Providence indeed preſides over all; and ſometimes diſappoints the Hopes of the moſt wiſe and induſtrious: but in general, it is the prudent man whoſe circumſtances are the moſt comfortable: becauſe Prudence leads him to all thoſe methods which are moſt conducive to render them ſo; as diligence, frugality,

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frugality, caution, honeſty, and the moſt valuable friendſhips; while an imprudent man, who is in the beſt way of raiſing an Eſtate, oftentimes either by Idleneſs, or Luxury, or Diſſipation, or Raſhneſs, or forfeiting his Credit by low diſhoneſt Arts, is ſoon reduced to infamy and diſtreſs. A man muſt be a great ſtranger to the world, who has not often ſeen theſe principles verified in the practices of men, and in the conſequences of their different Conduct.

3. A temper and conduct habitually govern'd by Prudence, greatly contributes to a man's Credit, Reputation, and Influence in life. It conciliates the Eſteem and Confidence of others, and procures and eſtabliſhes the moſt valuable and laſting Friendſhips. To ſuch a one no man is an open Enemy, but at the expence of his own Judgment and Character. And though a man of prudence may ſometimes be the Butt of envy and malevolence, yet the Shafts which are aimed at him (eſpecially if very near and with a vigorous hand) rebound back in the face of him that throws them. Integrity, that ſeven-fold ſhield, defends his heart againſt all the pointed artillery of undeſerved

Abuſe

Abuſe and Defamation, much better than all the braſs that impudence and ſelf-conceit can oppoſe to them. *This* may perhaps for the preſent turn them aſide, *that* perpetually repels them: *this* may ſometimes blunt, *that* always breaks them. SERM. IV.

4. A Life habitually governed by the rules of Prudence, is a ſource of perpetual Peace and Self-enjoyment. *A good man* (ſays Solomon) *is ſatisfied from himſelf*, (*d*) i. e. he finds a ſpring of ſecret ſatisfaction in his own mind, from the approbation of his own Conſcience. And this is never more ſenſibly experienced, than under ſome adverſe occurrence in Life, which unavoidably befalls him. He hath no additional pain in reflecting that he brought this evil upon himſelf; but the ſatisfaction to think, that though the moſt prudent conduct could not prevent it, yet a ſteady and undeviating Prudence may greatly alleviate the weight, and ſhorten the continuance of it: or however, that in this way he is ſure that *that* Providence which ſent it, will ſecure to him a happy Iſſue of it; or if he takes care that it

(*d*) Prov. xiv. 14.

it does him no harm, *that* will take care it ſhall do him much good.

Laſtly. The Importance of this Virtue in the ſocial Life, appears from the many inconveniencies and miſeries which it prevents; and which every day beſet a courſe of Imprudence, Diſſipation and Folly. The unhappy conſequences of a diſſolute and ungoverned conduct are innumerable, and often fatal: and none more than this, that it ſtupifies the underſtanding, and renders the Sinner inſenſible of his miſery. Many a fair character and fair eſtate have been ruined, not only by a courſe of flagitious Iniquity, but by a train of thoſe leſſer follies called Imprudencies; which in their effects are no leſs detrimental to our worldly Intereſts. *e. g.* a prevailing propenſity to vain and expenſive pleaſures, to Show and Equipage, or indulging to elegance of Taſte in domeſtick life, beyond what our fortunes will ſupport; lauching out into a larger compaſs of Buſineſs, than our capacities, ſubſtance, or time will permit us to manage as it ſhould be; inconſiderately giving large Credit to perſons of ſuſpected Characters; laying our ſelves under Bonds and Engagements for others

others unneceſſarily; keeping bad Company; continued negligence in accounts and oeconomy; Indolence, and neglecting to improve Opportunities; entering into dangerous and enſnaring Connexions in the younger part of Life; and eſpecially into the moſt cloſe and intimate connexion and relation for Life, precipitantly, inconſiderately, and contrary to the advice of Friends: a wrong ſtep, which we often ſee draws after it a long train of Miſeries, not to be removed but by the hand of Death. Now all theſe evils and calamities, which are the neceſſary effects of theſe and ſuch like follies and indiſcretions, Prudence intirely prevents; and not only ſo, but ſecures the contrary Bleſſings: which evidently ſhows of how much importance and influence it is, in the Social and Civil Life. But

2. Its importance is not leſs in the religious Life; but much greater. For

1. Nothing diſhonours Religion more than the want of it. O, how much hath Chriſtianity ſuffer'd through the imprudence of its moſt forward and zealous Profeſſors! To go about to enumerate the ſeveral ſorts of imprudences, whereby many who make high

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high pretenſions to Religion vilify and diſhonour it, would be to betray the very foible I condemn. For its appearances are as various, and its kinds as numerous as thoſe of vice itſelf; from which it differs only in degree.

Without taking notice of thoſe indiſcretions of Conduct, by which Chriſtians often injure the Religion they profeſs, I ſhall here only remark ſome of thoſe Miſtakes which they raſhly and imprudently imbibe; whereby they often diſcredit Religion while they ſeek to promote it. *e. g.* It is great imprudence to pay a religious regard to things that have nothing of Religion in them; as human Ceremonies, external Rites of worſhip, particular modes of Dreſs, or ſome peculiar Terms and Phraſes; the leaſt deviation from which (though of no divine authority) is deemed by ſome a mark of impiety.—It is imprudent for a man to be ſo zealouſly attached to any particular ſcheme of Doctrines, as to diſaffect, and cenſoriouſly condemn as Hereticks and unſound Chriſtians, all thoſe who do not believe them in the ſame ſenſe, nor expreſs the ſame zeal for them as he does: and eſpecially if thoſe notions

notions are dark, deep, and myſtical; and have no tendency to direct the Life, or mend the Heart: and more eſpecially, if they be of a dangerous nature; may eaſily be miſtaken and abuſed, and often have been ſo, to the great diſhonour of God and the ſubverſion of all Religion. SERM. IV.

Again, it is imprudent to lay a great ſtreſs upon little things. Becauſe the Zeal that thus runs waſte, is commonly wanted in matters of the higheſt Importance.

It is imprudent to prefer the means of Religion before the end; and much more, to make the uſe of the means a plea to juſtify the neglect of the end: as they do, who becauſe they diligently attend the outward exerciſes of Religion, think they are more excuſable in the neglect of their moral Conduct.

Again, it is very imprudent (to ſay no worſe) to make Religion an Engine of Covetouſneſs, or a Stalking-horſe to earthly Preferment. It is very imprudent to pay a greater regard to the authority of men than to that of Chriſt; to chuſe to be called by other names than his; to found a religious Doctrine or Sentiment on one particular

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paſſage or two of Scripture, without comparing it with the general Tenor of Scripture; to be moſt poſitive in matters that are moſt dark and doubtful; and finally, to lay a greater ſtreſs on a right Faith than a holy Life.

Theſe are all great imprudences; the Imputation of which we ſee many Chriſtians inadvertently incur: whereby they greatly hurt the true intereſt of Religion, while they think to promote it; and at once grieve its Friends, and gratify its Enemies. But

2. Prudence as much adorns and recommends Religion, as Imprudence expoſes it. Prudence preſents it in all its native purity, efficacy and lovelineſs: makes a ſolid, regular, wiſe, conſiſtent Chriſtian: keeps every thing in right order, and due bounds: views them in their true light; adjuſts the proper weight, ſurveys the whole extent, and attends to the natural Conſequences of things; examines the original foundation of thoſe Doctrines that are recommended as the objects of religious Faith; and ſo far as it ſees them bear the ſtamp of divine authority, and the evident marks of high

high importance, it forms them into the temper of the mind, and the habit of Life; ſo far as it ſees them to be matter of doubt and immaterial ſpeculation, it treats them with a candid indifference; and ſo far as it ſees them to be without authority, and of pernicious tendency, it rejects them with a determinate but charitable Reſolution; abhorring the bad tendency and conſequences of the Doctrines, while it makes the moſt kind and chriſtian apology and allowance for thoſe who are deceived by them. SERM. IV.

And above all things, a prudent man will take care that the innocence and uſefulneſs of his Life may have a practical influence on all, in favour of the Faith he profeſſes. So much does Prudence adorn and recommend a Religious Character. Beſides

3. Prudence is neceſſary not only to examine the foundation of every Doctrine, but to regulate every Virtue in Religion: without which, either by the unſeaſonable exerciſe, or an oſtentatious diſplay, or the exceſſive rigor of them, they would change their nature and become ſinful; religious Zeal degenerate into malignant Fury; Humility into Meanneſs; Self-denial into un-

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neceſſary Auſterities; Piety into Superſtition; Faith into Fancy; Love of Truth into Libertiniſm; Charity into Licentiouſneſs; Moderation into Lukewarmneſs; and Orthodoxy into Bigotry. And by this means not only give others a bad impreſſion of thoſe Virtues, but a favourable Opinion of the Vices that are concealed under the ſhow of them: and thus lead ſome men to put good for evil, and tempt others to purſue evil for good. O, how much confuſion hath been introduced into religious Schemes and Characters by theſe means! and all for want of a careful diſcernment or a little common Prudence.

Laſtly. The importance of Prudence in Religion appears further from hence, that it not only ſtrips off all the Diſguiſes, but defends and fortifies the Foundation of it: guards every Paſs by which its enemies may approach to the attack; and while it wards off, (by the ſolid ſhield of Faith) every weapon that is aim'd againſt it, by a ſtrong rebound from evident fact and reaſon, it throws them back on the head of the Aſſailants; retires to the Fort, planted with the Artillery of Truth, to which the moſt furious Enemies

Enemies of Chriſtianity are always fearful of making their approach. So that however they may triumph in the demolition of ſome new erected Outworks, they always find the Citadel impregnable—Of ſuch vaſt importance is Prudence to the intereſt of Religion. SERM. IV.

And now to conclude with a few general Reflections. How happy were it if Piety and Prudence always went together! But, alas, how often do we ſee them ſeparated! Meekneſs and Wiſdom, Piety and Prudence, good ſenſe and a ſerious ſpirit, Grace and Diſcretion, the *wiſdom of the ſerpent* and the *innocence of the Dove*, united, form a moſt amiable Character indeed. But too often we have the mortification to ſee the Friends of religion, by great Indiſcretions and Errors either in judgment or practice, do a greater injury to it than all its moſt avowed and open Enemies.

Let us henceforth learn then to lay a greater ſtreſs upon this part of the Chriſtian temper than we hitherto have done. The beneficial effects of it, which have now been mention'd, are ſufficient to recommend it to

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our Eſteem and Practice; eſpecially when compared with thoſe of the contrary Character, as above ſpecified.

And don't let us think that it is a matter of mere morality that hath now been recommended to us. It is one of the moſt amiable and eſſential branches of the Chriſtian Temper: of which our bleſſed Lord and Maſter hath ſet us the moſt illuſtrious Example, in his life and character: and which, as his Diſciples, we are bound to imitate.

The conſpicuous luſtre of this virtue in the Meſſiah's Conduct, was the ſubject of antient Prophecy; *Iſa.* lii. 13. *My ſervant ſhall deal prudently.* And how many inſtances of his prudent and inoffenſive, regular, and exact deportment, could I eaſily collect from the Hiſtory of his life!—Once, to prevent giving offence, he wrought a miracle (*e*). When the moſt artful ſnares were laid for him by his ſubtle enemies the *Phariſees*, how often, by his wiſe and prudent anſwers, did he extricate himſelf to the confuſion of his Adverſaries, and the admi-

(*e*) Mat. xvii. 27.

admiration of all! He never took nor gave unreaſonable Offence. And when a juſt occaſion of offence was once given by the raſhneſs of one of his Diſciples, he wrought a Miracle to prevent the bad effects of it: I mean the caſe and cure of *Malchus*. With how much patience and prudence did he bear with the weakneſs, petulance, and prejudice of his Diſciples! with the cavils and inſults of his Enemies! reſolutely aſſerting the cauſe of Right and Truth, in the face of its moſt violent oppoſers: but with a meekneſs and gentleneſs, humility, conſtancy, reſolution and wiſdom, that daunted all their courage, or defeated all their craft. And finally, with what inimitable prudence and patience did he behave, under all the rude and inhuman indignities that were offered him, during his laſt Trial and Condemnation! Every action of his Life was a perfect conformity to all the rules of Reaſon, Truth, and Decency. SERM. IV.

Thus he ordered his temper and conduct invariably, under every circumſtance of Life; and thus he requires us to order ours. Let us *be followers of him then as*

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dear Children, and walk with wiſdom; order our affairs with diſcretion; look well to our goings; prudently attend to the true nature and final iſſue of things: and thus ſhall we adorn Religion, and *walk worthy of the holy name with which we are called.*

The HYMN.

I.

Father of lights, conduct my feet
Thro' life's dark, dangerous road;
And, O, let every ſtep ſtill bring
Me nearer to my GOD.

II.

Let Heaven-ey'd *Prudence* be my guide,
And, when I go aſtray,
Recall my feet from folly's path,
Into a better way.

III.

Teach me thro' every various ſcene
To keep my end in view;
And whilſt I tread life's mazy track
Let wiſdom be my clue.

IV. *That*

IV.

That Wiſdom which is from above
Abundantly impart;
And let it guard, and guide, and warm,
And penetrate my heart;

V.

Till it ſhall lead me to thy ſelf,
Fountain of Bliſs and Love:
And all my darkneſs be diſpers'd
In endleſs light above.



SERMON V.

Of CHRISTIAN FORTITUDE.

1 COR. xvi. 13.

Watch ye, ſtand faſt in the faith, quit you like men, be ſtrong.

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WHAT the Apoſtle recommends to us in the *latter* part of this verſe, is chriſtian Fortitude; as neceſſary to that Vigilance and Stedfaſtneſs which he commands in the *former*. *Fortitude* then is that part of the chriſtian temper to which we are this day to apply our attention: the *nature* and *neceſſity* whereof I ſhall now endeavour diſtinctly to lay before you.

I. Let us conſider the true *nature* of chriſtian Fortitude; under the following particulars.

1. For-

1. Fortitude properly ſignifies a Strength of mind. So its Etymology imports; and ſo it is expreſſed in the Text, *be ſtrong*. When rightly governed and directed, it ſhews a great and manly ſpirit. When oppoſed to Lukewarmneſs, it is called Zeal: when oppoſed to Fear, Valour: and when oppoſed to Cowardice, Courage. It is a magnanimity or Greatneſs of mind, that dares to meet any danger and encounter any difficulty, at the Call of Conſcience, Honour and Duty.

2. Fortitude is one of the greateſt of all the military Virtues. And was in ſo high Eſteem among the old *Romans* (a military people) that the ſame word with them expreſſes both Virtue and Valour. And as every Chriſtian is in a militant ſtate, and hath many ſpiritual Enemies to conflict with, Fortitude therefore ſtands in the foremoſt rank among the chriſtian Virtues.

3. Fortitude is commonly divided into *active* and *paſſive*. The former conſiſts in boldly attempting any great and good Deſign, and undauntedly perſevering in the proſecution of it, through all oppoſition and obſtruct-

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obſtructions: the latter conſiſts in ſuffering, with an equal and compoſed mind, the afflictions, pains, and trials that befall us, and patiently ſuſtaining the Labour and Trouble we may meet with therein.

Active Fortitude is called *Valour*; paſſive Fortitude, *Patience*: but as they equally diſcover a great and noble mind, they both go under the common name of *Magnanimity*.

4. Chriſtian Fortitude is eſſentially different from a natural Courage. It is quite another thing; hath different Objects, and ariſes from different Pinciples. We often ſee a great deal of the one, where there is not the leaſt Symptom of the other. Many, who were naturally of the moſt weak and timorous Spirits, have undauntedly deſpiſed the greateſt dangers and ſufferings, nay, even Death itſelf, in the cauſe of GOD and a good Conſcience; when men of much natural courage, have not been able to ſtand the loweſt ſneer and ridicule, for the ſake of Truth and Virtue.

5. Chriſtian Fortitude is greatly aſſiſted and ſupported by Faith. Faith, by fixing the

the Souls eye on heavenly and eternal things, and giving it a ſtrong View of GOD and Glory, inſpires it with Life and Strength and Spirit, to break down every Impediment, and ruſh through every danger, that intercepts her way to it What mighty Atchievements have been performed by the Fortitude of Faith, and how well it ſuſtained the antient Worthies and Martyrs, under all the tortures inflicted upon them by their perſecuting Enemies, ſee the catalogue of thoſe Worthies given us by the Apoſtle *Heb.* xi. *who through faith ſubdued Kingdoms, wrought righteouſneſs, obtained promiſes, ſtopped the mouth of lions, quenched the violence of fire, eſcaped the edge of the ſword, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the army of aliens: women received their dead raiſed to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting the offered deliverance, that they might obtain a better Reſurrection.* SERM. V.

6. Fortitude, like every other Virtue, unleſs it be directed and governed by Prudence and Wiſdom, looſes its quality, and degenerates into a hurtful and miſchievous Diſpoſition. For unleſs it be kept under the

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the guard and conduct of Reaſon, it will be employed in a bad cauſe, or be carried to exceſs. In the former caſe, it is not Fortitude but Folly; and in the latter it is not true Valour but Raſhneſs. Active Fortitude in a bold and enterprizing mind (like that Zeal by which it is inſpired) is of a fierce, and fiery nature; and if not tempered by the milder Virtues of Meekneſs, Peace, and Prudence, is apt to run into exceſſes that produce all the bad effects of Bigottry, and a blind ungoverned Paſſion.

Laſtly. We hence ſee wherein a true chriſtian Fortitude is characteriſtically diſtinguiſhed, not only from a natural courage, but from that true Valour which is a mere moral Virtue. True Valour, as a moral Virtue, is different from a natural Courage, or mere mechanical Inſtinct, as it is always calm, compoſed and ſedate; and neither fears nor deſpiſes the danger it is going to meet: but a chriſtian Fortitude hath not only theſe properties, which diſtinguiſhes a virtuous Valour from a natural Courage, but moreover it is excited by greater Motives, governed by higher views, and animated with nobler Principles: not to ſay, that

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that the Objects of it are more excellent and arduous, than thoſe that ever put mere human Courage to its utmoſt proof. For it is more noble to vanquiſh inveterate habits of Sin, than to overthrow an hoſtile Hoſt; more difficult to ſubdue our Corruptions, than to conquer Kingdoms; and indeed impoſſible, without the concurrence of Divine Auxiliaries. *He that is ſlow to anger* (ſays *Solomon*) *is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his ſpirit, than he that taketh a City (d). Better*, that is, he is the better man, the greater Hero of the two.

Theſe Hints may ſuffice to give you a right notion of that Chriſtian Fortitude, which I am now about to recommend to you; from

II. The next thing I am to lay before you: viz. its vaſt *Importance* and extenſive Uſefulneſs in the Chriſtian Life.

Now, the neceſſity and importance of this will plainly appear if we conſider, that our preſent ſtate is a ſtate of warfare, in which

(d) Prov. xvi. 32.

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which the Subtilty and Policy of our Enemies require all our Vigilance; their Implacability and Obſtinacy demand all our Conſtancy and Perſeverance; and their Numbers and Strength call for all our Reſolution, Self-denial, and unremitted Labour. But unleſs our Souls are armed and nerved with this chriſtian grace of Fortitude, neither our Vigilance, Perſeverance, nor Reſolution can be durable or effectual.

1. It is neceſſary to a conſtant Vigilance. No leſs neceſſary than *this* is to our ſafety: for without the help of this chriſtian Virtue of Fortitude, we ſhall ſoon grow weary of watching; ſhall ſleep on our Guard, and give our ſpiritual enemies all the advantage over us they can deſire. It is an Inſtruction of vaſt importance, and enforced with a conſideration of no leſs weight, which the Apoſtle *Peter* gives us 1 *Pet.* v. 8. *be ſober, be vigilant, becauſe your adverſary the Devil, as a roaring Lion, walketh about ſeeking whom he may devour.* Sobriety is mention'd firſt, as that which is indiſpenſibly neceſſary to Vigilance. And that chriſtian Fortitude is no leſs ſo appears from the verſe where my text is: *watch ye* (ſays the Apoſtle)

ſtand

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ſtand faſt in the faith, quit you like men, be ſtrong. Where the laſt Duty is mentioned, not as reſulting from, but as neceſſary to the former: for all our watchfulneſs will avail nothing, unleſs we have Courage to oppoſe the difficulties and dangers which our Vigilance detects. — And then

2. It is no leſs neceſſary to our Perſeverance; or ſtedfaſtneſs in the faith. *Stand faſt in the faith, quit you like men be ſtrong.* Without Perſeverance, a ſteady uniform Perſeverance, in the uſe of thoſe means which are moſt proper to attain any end propoſed, we ſhall certainly fail of it. And if that end be diſtant and important, and the means to attain it difficult, much Courage, Patience and Fortitude are requiſite; without which it can never be ſecured.

Now the chief end we all profeſs to aim at, is the greateſt and moſt important that can be; nothing leſs than eternal Life, or everlaſting Happineſs when we quit this World. This end lies at a diſtance, and for that reaſon it is too often out of ſight; and our way to it encumbered and embaraſſed with many difficulties: ſome of the means neceſſary to attain it are very oppoſite to the Bent of our

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natural Inclinations; and therefore without this chriſtian magnanimity we ſhall be diſcouraged, give out, and at once loſe all our paſt Labour and future Hopes. It is in a *Patient continuance in well doing*, that we muſt ſeek for Glory, *Honour, and Immortality*, and a well eſtabliſhed Hope of *eternal Life*

When I treated lately of *Patience*, you may remember I mentioned this ſteady perſeverance in Duty among the inſtances of *paſſive* Courage; but as it not only implies quietly bearing the troubles and difficulties we may meet with therein, but a vigorous effort of the mind to ſurmount them, it may with equal propriety be conſidered as an inſtance of *active* Fortitude: for thoſe difficulties muſt not only be ſuſtain'd but conquered, in order to a ſucceſsful Perſeverance.

(Laſtly) The importance of this chriſtian virtue of Fortitude, Reſolution and Self-command will further appear, if we conſider how neceſſary it is to the exerciſe of that Self-denial which Chriſt indiſpenſably requires of all his Diſciples. *If any man will come after me, let him take up his croſs and follow me.* And though we have not ſo much

much to fear from the avowed Enemies of our Chriſtian profeſſion as his firſt Diſciples had, and are in no danger of being called to the ſame kind of Trials as they were, yet we have enemies of another nature that frequently beſet us, and ſtick cloſe to us; which render all our ſelf-denying Fortitude equally neceſſary. I mean our corrupt Habits, irregular Paſſions, ſinful Appetites, and ſenſual Inclinations; which not only call for all our Vigilance to detect, but all our Fortitude to oppoſe them. SERM. V.

A Chriſtian's Life is not a life of Eaſe and Self-indulgence. A State of Warfare, Pilgrimage, Diſcipline, Education, and Trial, requires much reſolution, ſelf-denial, and fortitude: and ſuch are the repreſentations which the Scripture gives us of the Chriſtian's life in this World. Were Religion only a matter of outward Form or external Service, it were no very hard matter: though even this cannot in ſome circumſtances be complied with, without ſome ſelf-denial, or putting a kind of force on our inclinations to attend the calls of Duty: but as it is an inward as well as an outward thing, and conſiſts in the government of

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the whole inward man, our thoughts, affections, diſpoſitions and deſires, it is a more extenſive and important Buſineſs, and attended with greater difficulty, and calls for much more ſelf-diſcipline, than perſons who are addicted to a ſuperficial way of thinking in this matter are able to conceive.

Thus much may ſerve for a general account of the Importance of this Chriſtian grace of Fortitude. But as we commonly have a more clear and diſtinct view of a Subject by deſcending to particulars, it may be proper therefore to ſpecify ſome caſes, wherein this Virtue will be of the moſt eſſential ſervice to us; or when the exerciſe of it becomes in a peculiar manner neceſſary. And

1. When we are called, by the providence of GOD, to any Duty wherein we foreſee, or imagine we foreſee, ſome particular difficulty or danger. I ſay, *imagine we foreſee*; for there is hardly any caſe wherein the Imagination is more ready to deceive us than in this: either by muſtering up Difficulties and Dangers that have no exiſtence at all but in our own Fancy; or by magnifying thoſe that are real, to an enormous degree.

gree. But the truth and bottom of the matter is, it is the corruption and carnality of our own wicked Hearts that ſet the imagination thus at work, to deter and diſſuade us from a compliance with the directions of God and Conſcience. This therefore we ſhould remember, when we find any ſuch indiſpoſition and diſinclination to a plain and poſitive Duty; and be aſſured, that whatever our Imaginations may ſuggeſt, the Difficulty is not near ſo great as it now appears: and this we ſeldom fail to find, upon reſolutely ſetting about it.* SERM. V.

Cowardice and Timidity in this caſe, and an eaſy yielding to the dictates of Fancy and Inclination, will throw us into the greateſt danger of making *ſhipwreck of a good Conſcience:* and when once we have done that, the difficulty of purging it of the guilt we have contracted, in order to recover our inward peace, will be much greater than what was requiſite to keep our Conſcience clear. When we find ourſelves then at any time

* *The wiſe and active conquer difficulties*
By daring to attempt them: ſloth and folly
Shiver and ſhrink at ſight of toil and danger;
And make the Impoſſibility they fear. ROWE.

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under theſe double and contrary attractions of Inclination and Conſcience, let us ſummon up all our courage, and ſay; 'The 'Duty to which I find my ſelf ſo averſe, is 'neceſſary and important: were it not ſo, 'my corrupt heart would not be ſo ſtrongly 'ſet againſt it. It is the command of GOD, 'and muſt be done: and in his name and 'grace I will immediately ſet about it.' This will immediately break the ſpell, and rid us of our embarraſſment: and in the Iſſue we always find, that the difficulty of any Duty, is more than recompenſed by the pleaſure of reflecting on the conſcientious performance of it.

2. We ſtand in great need of Faith and chriſtian Fortitude in an hour of Temptation; and in reſiſting thoſe ſolicitations to ſin which we often meet with from within, and from without.

Many ſuch ſhall we meet with from within: from our own corrupt and evil-diſpoſed Hearts; from the irregular workings of our paſſions, thoughts, and appetites: a ſtrong propenſion to Vanity and Folly; or a criminal indiſpoſition to Duty; and a proneſs to Self-indulgence in both. For when we

we are ſenſible of the danger and evil of them, it requires no ſmall Self-denial and Reſolution to conquer them. SERM. V.

And many more we ſhall meet with from the vain and ſinful world we live in; where we every day ſee the moſt wide and exorbitant deviations from the chriſtian Rules, both in Life and Temper, Faith and Practice: and thoſe who are moſt chargeable with them, to be moſt unconcerned about them, and moſt regardleſs of the conſequence. And of this number we often ſee men of Birth, diſtinguiſhed Parts, and Learning; whoſe example hath the worſt influence on their inferiors and dependants. And nothing is more infectious than evil examples, and eſpecially to younger minds; and more eſpecially when daily ſet before their Eyes; by Perſons who are ſuperior to them in authority and ſtation; and perhaps dear to them by nature and friendſhip.—To reſiſt ſuch a Temptation, and in oppoſition to it, to perſiſt ſtedfaſtly and uniformly in the paths of Virtue and Piety, in conformity to the chriſtian Precepts, as laid down by Chriſt and his inſpired Apoſtles, in Faith, Practice and Worſhip, what a ſtrong con-

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viction of truth and right, what a vaſt force and ſtability of mind does this require! which without the concurrence of a divine power, can never be exerted or maintain'd: and yet, unleſs it be, and this Tide of evil examples be ſtemm'd, we ſhall be carried down the Torrent of the general degeneracy, into the Ocean of everlaſting miſery and perdition.

It requires much chriſtian Fortitude then to oppoſe the influence of evil examples; but much more to give a juſt and ſeaſonable Reproof to thoſe who ſet them: a duty which we are ſometimes indiſpenſably called to, and which it requires the greateſt delicacy of Addreſs and Wiſdom, as well as Fortitude of mind, to execute with ſucceſs. From the danger and difficulty of which Duty, we ſhall be ſtrongly tempted to neglect it: eſpecially when the perſons we are called to reprove, appear not ſenſible that they deſerve any Reproof; and by looking upon their Conduct and Temper in a different light from what we do, are far from thinking there is any harm in either. But to proceed

3. We

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3. We ſhall have need of much Faith and Fortitude, in aſſerting and maintaining the important Truths, and genuine Spirit of Chriſtianity, in a day when they are both ſo generally neglected or miſtaken. When the plain important Doctrines of our holy Religion are boldly attacked and diſavowed by ſome, and miſerably perverted and diſguiſed by others: when Infidels make a mock of our profeſſion, and Bigots and Enthuſiaſts expoſe it, by a furious Zeal for the moſt unſcriptural and dangerous notions; placing them in the ſame rank of importance with the moſt eſſential and fundamental parts of Chriſtianity: and whilſt others, ſhocked and chagrined at the appearance and conſequence of ſuch unchriſtian and unhallowed contentions about little things, degenerate into the utmoſt Indifference and Lukewarmneſs about the greateſt: while ſome who have proper notions of the chriſtian Faith, have none at all of the chriſtion Spirit; and others are right in neither, who think themſelves poſſeſſed of both:— in ſuch a ſtate of things (I ſay) when all are moſt confident of their own Tenets, and moſt aſſured of their own Way, what is to be

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be done? but reſolutely and firmly to adhere to the word of GOD in oppoſition to them all: take *that* for our only Teſt and Standard, and abſolutely determine to form our Faith, Temper and Practice by that only; with humble prayer for, and dependance upon, divine illumination and ſtrength; though we ſhould incur the cenſure and condemnation of the whole World thereby. That this is right, that this is reaſonable, every Chriſtian allows, and Conſcience demands it. But we muſt not only approve, but practiſe it; not only admit but dare to do it. And this, it muſt be owned, requires no ſmall Firmneſs and Fortitude of mind. But without it, I do not ſee how we can keep our conſcience clear.

Unreaſonable ſingularity is without all doubt contemptible. But a reſolute ſingularity, in defence of the plain important principles of Truth and Righteouſneſs is neceſſary; and when neceſſary, is true chriſtian *Heroiſm*.

4. Chriſtian Fortitude is in a ſpecial manner neceſſary in a time of Perſecution. For this may poſſibly be the effect of exerting our zeal and ſtedfaſtneſs in the manner, and

and upon the occaſion before mentioned. So that one inſtance of Magnanimity, from the oppoſition it encounters, may ſometimes create the neceſſity of a greater. Bleſſed be GOD this is a trial of chriſtian Fortitude that we are at preſent in no apparent danger of. But though we are not like to be Confeſſors or Martyrs for the cauſe of Chriſtianity, as the primitive Chriſtians were, yet we may poſſibly fall into Company, where our determined adherence to Conſcience, Truth and Religion, may be conſtrued as an unreaſonable and affected preciſeneſs; and expoſe us to hard Cenſures, if not to Obloquy, Contempt and Ridicule. In ſuch a ſituation (if our conſcience acquit us of all indiſcreet warmth and weakneſs) we ſhould ſummon all our chriſtian Courage, and with an Apoſtolick ſpirit of Martyrdom ſay, *It is a ſmall matter to be judged of mens judgment, he that judgeth me is the Lord:* and account the ſhame we endure for the cauſe of Chriſt and his Goſpel, our trueſt Glory. SERM. V.

When the Fear of man is like to unfit us for, or divert us from any plain important Duty, let us call to mind that nervous expoſtulation of the Prophet, *Who art thou that*

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that thou ſhouldſt be afraid of a man that ſhall die, and of the ſon of man which ſhall be made as Graſs? and forgetteſt the Lord thy Maker; who ſtretched out the Heavens, and laid the foundation of the Earth (o).

Laſtly, The time when we ſhall ſtand in the greateſt need of all our chriſtian Faith and Fortitude, is in the near approach of Death: when we ſtand trembling on the fatal Precipice, about to leap into the dark Gulf, unknowing what is beyond it: only that it is a world of Spirits, where our ſtate is fixed for Eternity, and from whence we ſhall never return. The very Thought makes us ſhudder at a diſtance. What will it do, when but a few hours intercept this and the eternal World! No Fortitude but that of the Chriſtian, and no chriſtian Fortitude but that which is founded on a ſtrong and lively Faith, in the gracious promiſes and diſcoveries of the Goſpel, can give the Soul a rational Repoſe, and Self-poſſeſſion then.

Thus have I endeavoured to open to you the true Nature, Extent, and Importance, of

(o) Iſa. li. 11. 12.

of this part of the Chriſtian temper: a Reſolution, Strength, and Firmneſs of mind, in ſtedfaſtly adhering at all times to the neceſſary and eſſential parts of the Chriſtian Faith and Practice; in oppoſition to every thing that tends to diſcourage us in, or ſeduce us from it. SERM. V.

I ſhall now conclude with laying before you a few Motives, which may at once ſerve to excite us to, and aſſiſt us in the Exerciſe of it.

1. Let us conſider how good a Cauſe we have. It is the cauſe of GOD we are called to ſtand up for; and he ſtands by to ſee in what manner we maintain it. Let us then *acquit ourſelves like men, and be ſtrong.* It is for our immortal Souls that we fight, againſt ſpiritual Wickedneſſes, and the powers of Hell which ſeek to ruin them. It is for an immortal Crown, *an eternal weight of Glory*, that we contend; and what demands the utmoſt efforts of our Zeal, Strength, Reſolution and Magnanimity if this does not? Shall earthly Heroes readily ſubmit to hardſhips, mortifications, and ſelf-diſcipline, for the ſake of a little temporal Honour and popular Fame; and ſhall we be afraid

to

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to undergo much leſs for the ſake of heavenly Recompences, and eternal Glory? *they do it to obtain a corruptible Crown, we an incorruptible* (o).

2. In a cauſe ſo juſt and glorious, we are ſtrengthened by a divine power; furniſhed with all-ſufficient grace. GOD himſelf is ever near at hand to help us; and to do for us *exceeding abundantly above all that we can aſk or think*; and ſupported by ſuch an almighty auxiliary, what enemy have we to fear? for infinitely ſtronger is he that is for us, than all thoſe that are againſt us.

When the LORD devolved the Government and Conduct of the *Iſraelites* upon *Joſhua*, after the death of *Moſes*, he repeated and earneſtly inculcated upon him the exerciſe of this Virtue which I am now recommending; and urged it by the very Motive I am now mentioning; (*viz.*) the aſſurance of his almighty Preſence and Help. *Joſh.* i. 5, 6. *As I was with Moſes, ſo will I be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forſake thee. Therefore be ſtrong, and of good Courage, verſe* 7. *only be thou ſtrong, and very couragious; that thou*

(o) 1 Cor. ix. 25.

thou mayeſt obſerve to do according to all the Law which Moſes my Servant commanded thee. Again ver. 9. *have I not commanded thee? be ſtrong, and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou diſmayed; for the Lord thy* GOD *is with thee, whither ſoever thou goeſt.* Beſides, SERM. V.

3. Reſolution and Fortitude in a good cauſe ſoon leſſen thoſe Difficulties, which to ſloth and folly appear unſurmountable; and eaſily conquer thoſe Enemies, which to indolence and cowardice ſeem invincible. As Fear turns mole-hills into mountains, Fortitude turns mountains into mole-hills; and as much diminiſhes the difficulty, as the other magnifies it.

It is always the property of little minds to miſrepreſent things according to their fears and fancies; to dread imaginary Evils as real, and poſſible ones as certain: whereas true Wiſdom, Faith and Fortitude take a timely precaution againſt the Evil they foreſee as probable; and thus prepared, boldly proceed to prevent or conquer it: by which means it either diſappears, or is ſoon vanquiſhed. For as we have often a greater pleaſure in the expectation of a temporal Good

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Good than in the enjoyment, ſo we often feel a greater pain in the apprehenſion of a temporal Evil than in bearing it. Juſt the reverſe is the nature of eternal Good and Evil: the pleaſures of Heaven will infinitely tranſcend all the ſaints moſt exalted Hopes, and the pains of Hell the ſinners greateſt Fears.

Laſtly, To excite our Fortitude in the cauſe and religion of Chriſt, let us ſet his great Example always before our eyes. O, what pains and perſeverance did he endure in all his *Labours of love* for us! with what a well-govern'd wiſe and ſteady Zeal, did he ſtem the Torrent of vice, hypocriſy, and wickedneſs, that abounded in the age in which he appeared! In his whole Conduct how well was tempered the fortitude of the Lion with the meekneſs of the Lamb! Though he never gave unneceſſary offence to any, yet he was not afraid to give the greateſt, even to his moſt implacable Enemies, when the cauſe of Truth and Righteouſneſs called him to expoſe the Hypocriſy and Villainy of the Scribes and Phariſees: which he laid open without reſerve; and addreſſed the moſt pungent Reproofs to their Con-

Conſciences, with undiſmayed fidelity and freedom. He met, encountred and conquered all the powers of Hell, armed with infernal virulence and vengeance to oppoſe the ſalutary Deſigns he came into the World for; and triumphed over them, *leading captivity captive.* SERM. V.

And are we not his Followers? liſted in the ſame ſervice, and called to fight in the ſame cauſe? Let us then *endure Hardneſs as the good Soldiers of Jeſus Chriſt*; and under his Banner, with the ſame Fortitude, *fight the good Fight of Faith*; and through him we ſhall ere long be *more than Conquerors, and receive a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away.*

The HYMN.

I.

Courage, my Soul; whilſt GOD is near
What Enemy haſt thou to fear?
How canſt thou want a ſure defence,
Whoſe refuge is omnipotence?

II.

Tho' thickeſt dangers croud my path,
To terrify my feeble faith;
My feeble faith on God relies,
And all thoſe dangers ſtill defies.

III.

Tho' billows after billows roul
To overwhelm my ſinking ſoul,
Firm as a rock my ſoul ſhall ſtand,
Upheld by an almighty hand

IV.

And when in death's dark vale I tread
'With gloomy horrors over-ſpread,
'My ſteadfaſt heart ſhall fear no ill,
'For thou, O Lord, art with me ſtill.'

V.

Still ſhall thy preſence be my aid,
Guide me ſafe thro' the horrid ſhade,
Chace all my riſing fears away,
And turn my darkneſs into day.

SERMON VI.

Of SELF-GOVERNMENT.

IV

PROV. ~~vi.~~ 23.

Keep thy Heart with all diligence.

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THE laſt and moſt extenſive of all the *human* Virtues is *Self-government*: which includes in it all the reſt that are not comprehended in thoſe I have before deſcribed; as Self-denial, Chaſtity, Moderation, Meekneſs, Temperance, and the like: all which are but ſo many modes or regular acts of Self-government.

This is the plain Import of the Words I have read: for *to keep the heart with all diligence*, is carefully to obſerve and regulate all that paſſes in it, and ſprings from it; in which the proper Government of our ſelves doth conſiſt.

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By ſelf-government I mean, ſuch a Command over our *Thoughts*, *Appetites*, and *Paſſions*, as to be able to repell, reſtrain, and ſubdue, thoſe that are evil and hurtful; and to retain, indulge and improve thoſe that are good and uſeful: or in other words, to bring them all into ſubjection to Conſcience, Reaſon, and Religion.

I ſhall ſpeak to each of theſe diſtinctly.

I. The Government of our Thoughts.

In this there is more of Religion than moſt men conceive. And perhaps there cannot be a more certain mark that the Fear of GOD prevails in our heart than this, that we make conſcience of our Thoughts. Becauſe tho' they are hid from the world, yet we know they are all as manifeſt and open to his Eye as our moſt publick Actions are to the Eyes of men. And therefore the Fear of God can be the only motive to guard them.

It would be to little purpoſe, I apprehend, to trace out the ſource of thoſe ſecret imaginations which ſo often ſteal imperceptibly into the heart, and which we are ſo apt to harbour there, before we conſider whether we

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we ought or no. It will be more for our advantage, to be diſtinctly inform'd, what thoſe Thoughts are (from whatever quarter they come) which ought to be immediately repell'd or rejected; and what are thoſe which are to be carefully retain'd and improv'd *(d)*. And

1. Let us conſider what thoſe Thoughts are which, as ſoon they enter, ought to be immediately diſmiſs'd. Of this kind are

(1.) All thoſe Thoughts which give the mind unneceſſary Pain and diſcompoſure. I ſay, *unneceſſary* Pain; becauſe there are ſome painful and uneaſy Thoughts, that are not only lawful, but beneficial; and improveable to pious purpoſes. For inſtance, the reflections of a guilty conſcience, and the remembrance of our paſt ſins, whether of omiſſion or commiſſion. Theſe ſentiments, tho' painful, are by no means to be ſtifled, but by all means to be indulg'd at certain ſeaſons, to renew our repentance and keep us humble in our own Eyes. But thoſe Thoughts which excite in the mind a needleſs diſquietude ought not to be admitted,

(d) Vid. Treatiſe on *Self-Knowledge*, Part 1. Chap. 14. and *Seed*'s Diſcourſes, Vol. I. *Serm.* ix.

much leſs retain'd. This ſingle Rule will be found to be of more ſervice to the tranquillity of the mind than we can well imagine, and for want of a due attention to it, many perſons for no cauſe become the moſt miſerable Self-tormentors.

(2.) All ſinful Thoughts, whether pleaſing or painful, are to be immediately baniſh'd, as ſoon as they intrude.

Some of theſe the mind is apt to indulge for the ſake of that falſe and vicious pleaſure they give it for a moment; but which leave bad impreſſions behind, and cheriſh a criminal diſpoſition in the heart.

Of this kind are all malevolent Thoughts againſt thoſe that have injured us: which only ſerve to foment a vindictive temper, and prompt us to retort the Injury: than which, nothing can be more repugnant to the meek, forgiving ſpirit of the Goſpel.

Of the ſame kind alſo are all impure and laſcivious Thoughts; which deeply taint and pollute the mind, and are often followed by very ſhameful and pernicious conſequences *(c)*.

Such

'(c) The mind is paſſive in receiving its notices of things, 'whether pure or impure, but it is active in its Determination 'whether to harbour or diſcard them. As far as it is Paſſive, 'it

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Such alſo are all vain and extravagant conceits of our own worth and importance, and the deference we conceive due to our Rank and Character: which only inflate the mind, and blow up that Pride which naturally ſwells the human heart.

Now theſe and ſuch like Imaginations, tho' they bring with them a degree of pleaſure for the preſent, yet appear in their nature and conſequences to be evidently ſinful, and therefore ought to be immediately ſuppreſs'd.

But there are other kind of Thoughts no leſs unlawful, that bring with them as much pain as thoſe I have juſt mention'd do pleaſure: which, nevertheleſs, by a ſtrange obliquity of heart, we are equally prone to cheriſh. — Such are all angry and reſentful Thoughts, which fret and chafe the mind; envious Thoughts, which canker and corrode the heart; anxious and fearful

'it is entirely innocent; as far as it is active, it is accountable: and it certainly is active when we dwell upon impure thoughts with complacency; when we ſtrengthen our ſelves in wickedneſs, by cheriſhing the remembrance of paſt guilty Joys, and laying ſcenes in our imaginations for the entertainment of future pleaſures.'

Seed's Diſcourſes, Vol. I. p. 238.

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Thoughts, which perplex and terrify the ſpirit; melancholy and deſponding Thoughts, which darken and deject the ſoul; and peeviſh, diſcontented Thoughts, which vex and harraſs the inner man. — All ſuch imaginations are to be forthwith expell'd on a double account: not only becauſe they are painful, but abſolutely ſinful; and equally pernicious both to Body and Mind. But

2. Not only all wicked but all impertinent, trifling and chimerical Thoughts are to be kept out of the heart as much as poſſible. For theſe two reaſons,

Becauſe they keep out better; and are unworthy a rational creature. For ſuch wild reveries differ nothing from waking dreams: and ſhew that *Reaſon*, the (ηγημονικη as the Antients call'd it, the) Preſident or ruling Power, is abſent or dormant; whoſe office it is to eject all ſuch impertinent Intruders. And

Becauſe if the mind once gets ſuch a Habit of trifling, it will be apt to indulge it at the moſt improper times; I mean the ſeaſons of Devotion, when it ought to be the moſt ſeriouſly and intently engaged.

Vain

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Vain Thoughts are too apt to ſteal into the beſt minds (GOD knows) when they ought to be better employ'd; but they will only *lodge in the hearts of fools.* The wiſe and pious will chaſe them away, as ſoon as they enter. And the more we accuſtom our ſelves to exerciſe this authority over them whenever they intrude, with the more eaſe ſhall we be able to repel them when they are moſt unſeaſonable and ſinful.

Well, theſe are the Thoughts we ſhould carefully guard againſt and reject. But

2. There are others which we ſhould endeavour with equal care to retain, cheriſh and improve. Which are the reverſe of thoſe before mention'd. *e. g.*

1. Any pleaſing and agreeable ſentiment may be admitted, provided it be pure, juſt, innocent and ſeaſonable. For if there be no juſt reaſon why it ſhould be diſcarded, this ſingle conſideration, that it gives us an innocent pleaſure, is a ſufficient reaſon why it ought to be retain'd. Becauſe it keeps the mind in good humour; and gives it a ſociable, friendly and benevolent diſpoſition. But

2. We

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2. We ſhould take more eſpecial care to retain our beſt Thoughts; ſuch as relate to GOD, to our Souls, to Heaven, and the way to Happineſs upon the Goſpel Scheme. To which we may add moral Reflections, and the moſt uſeful rules of life. Theſe kind of ſentiments, I ſay, we ſhould take more eſpecial care to cheriſh and improve; becauſe they directly tend to mend our ſpirits and make the heart better. And by the concurrent influences of the holy Spirit (of whoſe gracious motions theſe holy Thoughts are the genuine effects) they often become of more real uſe to us than a Sermon. And to furniſh the mind with a good ſtore of ſuch uſeful Thoughts, as ſubjects of future meditation, it would be proper to lay up in our memories, the moſt ſtriking and important ſentiments that occur to us in reading the ſacred ſcriptures, or any other good book; and keep them by us, as Food for the Soul, or matter for the mind to ruminate upon at leiſure.

Laſtly. Every uſeful and inſtructive Thought ſhould not only be recollected, but retain'd, revolv'd and improv'd. That is, when they are ſeaſonable: for ſome uſeful Thoughts,

Thoughts, when they are unſeaſonable, are impertinent and diſallowable. SERM. VI.

I ſhall conclude this branch of the ſubject with two reflections.

1. This part of Self-government is of greater importance, becauſe it has a greater effect upon the temper of our ſpirits, than is generally imagin'd. We commonly ſay, that *Thoughts are free.* By which we are only to underſtand that they are free from human cognizance. For if we mean, that we are free to entertain what Thoughts we will, and that we are not accountable for them at the Bar of GOD, 'tis a great miſtake; for the word of GOD expreſsly tells us that the very *thought of fooliſhneſs is ſin* (*a*); and that our ſecret Thoughts ſhall be brought into Judgment (*b*). And even a pagan Writer obſerves, *that whoever indulgeth the thought of any ſecret wickedneſs in his heart, is in a degree actually guilty of it* (*c*).

2. How uſefully may a perſon, who has learn'd this happy art of commanding his own

(*a*) Prov. xxiv. 9. (*b*) Eccl. xii. 14.
(*c*) Nam ſeclus intra ſe tacitum qui cogitat ullum
Facti crimen habet. JUVENAL.

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own Thoughts, fill up all his leiſure time! and enrich himſelf by gathering up theſe precious ſands which ſo often run to waſte! He will then not only never want Company or Buſineſs (for he may ſay with that great Roman General, *Scipio Africanus*, that *he is never leſs alone than when alone*) but he will never want the beſt Company. For we attain to true Wiſdom much ſooner by recollecting and digeſting our old notions by Meditation, than by acquiring new ones by Converſation. And beſides, by thus revolving and improving our moſt ſerious Thoughts, we invite GOD himſelf to be of our company; who never denies his preſence to thoſe who are thus prepar'd for it. But to proceed

II. Self-government not only implies a right Command of our Thoughts, but alſo a juſt regulation of our Appetites and Inclinations.

There are no Appetites or Deſires in the human nature but what are ſubſervient to ſome good end. This is certain, becauſe the wiſe Author of it does nothing in vain.

We

We have no appetites then, purely natural, but what may be indulg'd at certain times, and to a certain degree. But as ſuch gratifications are always attended with a ſenſible pleaſure, mankind are apt to indulge to that pleaſure too far, or to ſuffer their paſſion for it to riſe too high. And here lies their danger.

And let it be obſerv'd, that this is true not only with reſpect to ſenſitive entertainments, but alſo thoſe of Imagination, Speculation and Science: and any pleaſure whatever, to which the mind is carried by a ſtrong and prevalent propenſity (excepting that which ariſes from Religion and Virtue) may become a ſnare to us, and lead us into folly and tranſgreſſion: that is, if thoſe appetites or inclinations are ſuffer'd to riſe too high, or are indulg'd unſeaſonably, or to exceſs.—Let us attend to theſe particulars with a little more preciſion. And

1. Our natural Appetites (whatever they be, or however lawful in themſelves) are in danger of leading us into temptation, when they become too *violent* and ungovernable. Becauſe our Deſires when they once become diſproportionable to their Object, not only exceed

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exceed the Bounds of reaſon, (which is in itſelf unlawful) but hurry us on to an unſeaſonable or exceſſive gratification of them; which is much more ſo.

Beſide, this intemperate appetite or inordinate love for any earthly object, when unreſtrain'd, powerfully draws off the heart from GOD: and permits it to uſurp that place there which ought to be ſacred to him. And therefore 'tis properly called Idolatry. Whatever we love more than GOD, that is our Idol. And the guilt of this Idolatry is in proportion to the tendency of its object to ſenſualize the mind, and alienate it from ſpiritual, divine and heavenly things.

It is of vaſt conſequence therefore to the life of Religion, to be frequently looking into our Hearts; to ſee what it is that bears the chief ſway there; what appetites and inclinations moſt predominate; what are our habitual and ſtrongeſt attachments; and in what manner they operate: for if theſe be not vigilantly guarded, they will ſoon deceive and ſeduce us before we are aware. And to correct theſe violent and irregular propenſions in their firſt motions, is the beſt way to prevent thoſe hurtful effects which they

they will in time, if not check'd, never fail to produce. This is laying the Axe at the Root of the tree; before it produce thoſe bitter fruits, which, like ſweet poiſon, are not more palatable than pernicious. But SERM. VI.

2. Our Appetites and Inclinations may become criminal, not only when they are in themſelves too ſtrong and impetuous, but when they are improperly or *unſeaſonably* gratified. And this may ſometimes happen through the ſurprize of a Temptation, even when they are not of themſelves over vehement. Tho' it muſt be own'd that in general the ſtronger they are, the more apt they are to be thus abuſed.

The improper or unſeaſonable indulgence of any appetite, tho' in itſelf ever ſo innocent, I ſay, is ſinful. Take an inſtance of this in one of the moſt laudable inclinations of the mind; a Love of Literature: or a deſire to furniſh the mind with the knowledge of Books and Facts, and the Characters of men and times, antient and modern; to ſearch into the ſecret ſprings and laws, in order to explain the operations, of nature; and the like. If we have leiſure, ability, health and opportunity to purſue theſe Studies

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Studies with ſucceſs, 'tis commendable, and will add an ornament to our character. But if we proſecute them to the neglect of our proper and neceſſary Buſineſs, or to the detriment of our Health and Circumſtances; or at thoſe ſeaſons that are ſacred to more ſerious and important Employments, then the indulgence of that Inclination (laudable as it is in itſelf) becomes criminal.

And not only that which is innocent and commendable, but that which is in itſelf a Duty, by being unſeaſonable, becomes unlawful. So neceſſary is it to lay a reſtriction upon ſome of our better inclinations, at certain times, and in ſome circumſtances: which is a very conſiderable branch of Self-government. But

3. Our greateſt danger commonly ariſes from the *exceſſive* Indulgence of our appetites. Be they ever ſo innocent, or the gratification of them ever ſo ſeaſonable, yet if this be carried to an immoderate degree, it becomes ſinful. And hence ſome are more prone to offend in thoſe things which are lawful, than others are in thoſe which are not ſo.

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This branch of Self-government comprehends the virtues of Temperance, Sobriety and Moderation. For an inordinate or exceſſive gratification of animal appetites, is a tranſgreſſion of thoſe Bounds which theſe virtues preſcribe. Thoſe Bounds indeed 'tis no eaſy matter preciſely to aſcertain: becauſe the conſtitutions and capacities of men are ſo different, that *that* may be an exceſs in one man which is not ſo in another. But for a general Rule perhaps this may be as good as any; that whatever gratification of our animal appetites is carried beyond its proper end, and eſpecially if it ſubvert or defeat the end for which 'tis allow'd, that gratification exceeds the Bounds of Temperance, and therefore, in proportion as it does ſo, is unlawful. And of this nature itſelf gives us a fair warning, by taking away from the pleaſure of the gratification, in proportion to the approach we make to Exceſs; in which there is no pleaſure at all.

I ſhall conclude my Thoughts on this branch of Self-government with one obſervation of no leſs importance than any thing that hath been ſaid upon it: and that is, that the ſame care is requiſite to regulate

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our Averſions, as to rectify our Propenſions; becauſe the former are no leſs apt to ſeduce us than the latter: and in the ſame way too; that is, by being unreaſonable, unſeaſonable or immoderate. And therefore a conſtant vigilance to guard, examine and diſcipline theſe, is equally neceſſary to the right regulation of the Heart.

III. The laſt great branch of Self-government conſiſts in the due diſcipline of the Paſſions.

The Paſſions are the moſt blind and ſervile, and yet the moſt imperious and impetuous of all our Powers. They are of excellent ſervice when kept under the Command of Reaſon, but extremely miſchievous when they refuſe its Reins. They are in the human mind, what the ſails are in a Ship; which carry it with greater ſpeed the right or wrong way, according to the direction it is under. This ſhews how requiſite it is, that they who have ſtrong paſſions ſhould have a ſolid Judgment to direct them: which, however, is what we ſeldom ſee go together. And hence it is that Zeal

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(which is nothing but a warm and paſſionate attachment to certain points and practices relative to Religion) has often ſuch pernicious effects; and does juſt ſo much harm under a wrong direction, as it would do good under a right one. SERM. VI.

The Paſſions are uſually divided into Pairs, and join'd with their Oppoſites. As Love and Hatred, Joy and Sorrow, Hope and Fear, Contempt and Eſteem, and the like: and every Paſſion when it grows violent, is beſt ſubdued by playing its oppoſite againſt it.

In every conſtitution there is one paſſion that bears the chief ſway; commonly called the *ruling paſſion*; which exciting ſome prevailing appetite or inclination, diſtinguiſhes every one's particular character and temper: and being natural, is extremely hard to be regulated, when it becomes exceſſive. And from this ſource ariſes every man's conſtitutional Iniquity, or *the ſin that moſt eaſily beſets him.*

In ſome, the paſſions riſe too high; in others, they ſink too low. Both have their Inconveniencies; but the former the greateſt. *That* is the happieſt temper in which the

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paſſions are well mixt and equally poiſed: becauſe they are then moſt eaſily manag'd.

As there is no Appetite, ſo there is no Paſſion, planted in our nature, but what has it's Uſe; is in itſelf lawful, and may be made ſubſervient to excellent purpoſes. If it were not ſo, the all-wiſe author of our Being would never have ſuffer'd them to have had any place in our compoſition; who at firſt made and pronounced all things *good*. However, the unhappy effects of our original Apoſtacy, perhaps, are no where more viſible than in the wild diſorder it has introduced into theſe inflammable Powers of our mind.

The due Government of the paſſions conſiſts in two things.

1. In fixing them on right Objects. 2. In keeping them within proper Bounds: or adjuſting their degree to the Importance of thoſe Objects. Perſons of a paſſionate complexion are prone to offend in both theſe reſpects: and 'tis no leſs ſinful and dangerous to ſet the affections inordinately on a right Object, than to let them fix upon a wrong one. I know but of one exception to this Rule. Our Eſteem for the ſupreme Good,

Good, and our Fear of the greateſt Evil, are capable of no exceſs. That is, we cannot love GOD or hate Sin too much. SERM. VI.

Of all the Paſſions perhaps the leaſt manageable is Wrath, or intemperate Anger: eſpecially when ſeated in a mind naturally cholerick, and inflam'd by a conſtitutional Pride. Hence it has by way of eminence obtain'd the name of *Paſſion:* a conqueſt over which, *Solomon* tells us is a mark of the trueſt Heroiſm; *he that is ſlow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his ſpirit, than he that taketh a city* (*i*). And the dreadful effects of the predominance of this paſſion are elſewhere deſcrib'd by an image ſimilar to this; *he that hath no Rule over his own ſpirit, is like a city that is broken down and without walls* (*k*): that is, weak, defenceleſs, and expos'd to every Inſult and Injury. And thus the very thing a proud and paſſionate man is moſt afraid of, he lays himſelf moſt liable to.

To keep theſe turbulent powers of our nature in due order, the beſt way that I know of is — firſt, to find out our ruling paſſion, and put a double Guard on that: becauſe

(*i*) Prov. xvi. 32. (*k*) Prov. 25. 21,

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becauſe all the other follow its Lead. And when we have thus taken the fore Horſe by the Head, the reſt will of courſe be quiet.—The next Rule is to keep clear of that Company and thoſe Occaſions, that we have found by experience are apt to excite our moſt dangerous paſſions. This is *Solomon*'s Advice, *make no Friendſhip with an angry man, and with a furious man thou ſhalt not go; leſt thou learn his ways, and get a ſnare to thy ſoul* (*l*). A fiery-temper'd man, both for his own ſake and that of others, ſhould keep but little company.—To this we muſt add, a conſtant guard upon our ſpirit; and a frequent inſpection into our Hearts.—Summon one Paſſion to curb the violence of another: for being thus mixt and counterpois'd, they become more temperate.—Converſe chiefly with thoſe perſons who excell in that temper in which you are moſt defective.—Keep in view the beſt Examples for your Guide and Pattern: and eſpecially that of our great Lord and Maſter; who of this as well as every other inſtance of Self-government, hath left us a perfect example, and an expreſs Command *to walk in his ſteps.*

(*l*) Prov. xxii. 24, 25.

ſteps. — And to all we muſt add humble, fervent, frequent Prayer to the father of our ſpirits, that by his Grace we may be enabled to govern them, to the peace of our minds, the honour of Religion, and the Glory of his Name. SERM. VI.

So much for *Self-government:* the laſt and moſt extenſive of all the Human Virtues.

I have now gone through the ſeveral Graces which form the firſt part of the Chriſtian Temper: or thoſe Diſpoſitions we ought to preſerve and cultivate with regard to our ſelves; commonly call'd the *Human* Virtues. Which I have compris'd under theſe ſix; *Humility*, *Contentment*, *Patience*, *Prudence*, *Fortitude*, and *Self-government*. The next I propoſe to explain are thoſe which refer to GOD as their Object; and are therefore commonly call'd the *Divine Virtues*. Which are the Subjects of the ſix next Diſcourſes.

The HYMN.

I.

O, thou whoſe ſcales the mountains weigh,
Whoſe Will the raging ſeas obey,
Whoſe word can turn thoſe floods to flame,
That flame to ſtorm, that ſtorm can tame;

II.

Let all my paſſions ebb and flow
At thy command, Great GOD, and know
No other motive but thy praiſe,
Whate'er thoſe fiery ferments raiſe.

III.

Thou who canſt raging winds controul,
Subdue the rebel in my ſoul:
Thou who canſt calm the furious flood,
Repreſs the tumults of my blood.

IV.

With equal mind may I ſuſtain,
My lot of pleaſure, or of pain;
My joys and ſorrows gently flow,
Nor riſe too high, nor ſink too low.

V. Let

V.

Let but thy grace my powers controul,
And reign unrival'd in my ſoul,
Then, with whatever ſtorms oppreſt,
Center'd in thee ſhe is at reſt.

VI.

O, when ſhall my unwavering mind
This ſweeteſt ſelf-poſſeſſion find!
Fountain of Love, I long to ſee
In thee my peace, my Heaven in thee!

SERMON VII.

The Knowledge of GOD the firſt principle of Piety.

JOHN xvii. 3.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true GOD, *and Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent.*

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WE are now entering upon the ſecond branch of the Chriſtian temper; which conſiſts in the lively exerciſe of all thoſe graces which have an immediate reſpect to GOD as their Object: and are therefore commonly called the *Divine Virtues*.

And here the firſt thing required of us is, *to know* the great Author of our exiſtence. The Knowledge of GOD is the firſt princi-

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ple of Piety. — The Human Virtues have their foundation in our own nature; and ariſe from the conſideration of our Make and Frame, as creatures of a complex ſubſtance, compoſed of body and mind; and from our circumſtances in the preſent world, where we are ſurrounded with wants and pains, temptations, difficulties, and innumerable imperfections: the Divine Virtues are founded in, and reſult from, our relation to GOD, as the Author of our Being and Happineſs; and from our dependance upon him for both.

Man is naturally an inquiſitive creature, and loves to be prying and exploring into the reaſon and nature of things; even of thoſe that do but little or not at all concern him: yet how rarely do we hear him expreſs any deſire to be acquainted with the moſt noble and intereſting objects of his curioſity, *viz.* GOD and his own ſoul!

It is often mentioned in Scripture as the diſtinguiſhing character of the wicked, that they *know not* GOD; and *deſire not the knowledge of his ways*; but *forget him*, and *live without him in the world*: that he is *not in all their thoughts*, ſeldom in any of them.

And

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And *Job* obſerves, that while they ſuffer under his hand, they enquire not after him: *they cry out by reaſon of the arm of the mighty, yet none ſaith where is* GOD *my maker (a)?*

That I may treat this ſubject with as much clearneſs and brevity as the ſublimity and importance of it will admit, I ſhall

I. Shew you wherein this ſaving knowledge of GOD and of Chriſt, mentioned in the text, doth conſiſt.

II. Conſider the happy effects of it; denoted by thoſe words, *this is life eternal.*

I. I am to ſhew you wherein this ſaving Knowledge of GOD and Chriſt, mention'd in the text doth conſiſt.

Now the Knowledge of GOD may be taken in three different views.

1. Abſolutely; to ſignify an *adequate* and *perfect* knowledge of his nature and attributes: which is what no created Being is capable of. For *who can by ſearching find out* GOD, *who can find out the almighty unto per-*

(a) Job xxxv. 9, 10.

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perfection? it is high as heaven, what canſt thou do? deeper than hell, what canſt thou know? the meaſure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the ſeas (b). We are ſo far from comprehending his Eſſence, that we do not ſo much as apprehend the manner of his Exiſtence; which, as repreſented in his word, is a myſtery too deep to be fathom'd by the line of any finite underſtanding. How can finite comprehend what is infinite? in this ſenſe GOD only knows himſelf. And *his only begotten Son*, being eternally *in the boſom of his Father, he hath declared him whom no man hath ſeen at any time (c).*

2. There is a *juſt* and *right* Knowledge of GOD; which even we frail, imperfect creatures may, with proper helps and capacities, be enabled to acquire: which conſiſts in decent and ſuitable conceptions of the glorious perfections of his nature, as diſcovered and repreſented to us in his word and works. And ſuch a knowledge of GOD, even a wicked man of good parts and diligent application may attain, under the advantage of the Goſpel Revelation; and be able

(b) Job xi. 7—9. (c) John i. 18.

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able to talk and write, with great propriety, truth and juſtice, on the Attributes of the Divine Being. But

3. Very different from and ſuperior to this, there is an *inward influential* Knowledge of GOD; or an intimate ſpiritual acquaintance with him, which unites the heart to him, and is the means of receiving the ſweeteſt communications from him. Something like that friendly connexion and attachment, that is contracted by a ſimilitude of taſte and temper among men, and cemented by mutual intercourſe and benefits; which is the ſource of ſome of our moſt delightful entertainments on earth. For every one that thus knows GOD is a *Friend of* GOD. And this inward and ſpiritual acquaintance with him conſiſts in, and is manifeſted by, a daily delight in him, a holy communion with him, living under a conſtant ſenſe of him, and referring all our governing views to him.

1. One that hath this ſaving Knowledge of GOD *delights* in him. Delights to think of him, to contemplate his name in his works, in his ways, in his word, and in his Son: loves to draw nigh to him; and deems

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an abſence from him (as *David* did) an inſupportable burden. He rejoices at the return of thoſe ſeaſons when he is invited to meet his GOD, as the heart of a ſtranger does at the ſight of a long abſent Friend; ſaying with the pious *Pſalmiſt, I will go unto the altar of* GOD, *unto* GOD *my exceeding joy. As the Hart panteth after the water brook, ſo panteth my ſoul after thee O* GOD *(d).* SERM. VII.

And this delight in GOD is not like his earthly Delights, that ſtill leave the heart unſatisfied and craving; but it ſets the Soul at perfect reſt. It derives from it the moſt ſubſtantial benefit, and real laſting good. It ſtrengthens, as well as gladens the heart; and gives it at once the firmeſt eſtabliſhment, and the moſt exquiſite conſolation. All which is comprehended in thoſe words of *Eliphaz*; *acquaint now thy ſelf with him, and be at peace, thereby good ſhall come unto thee (e).*

2. This ſaving Knowledge of GOD reſults from, and is improved by, a ſenſible and frequent *communion* with him. This communion with GOD, or the enjoyment of his ſpecial Preſence (though the profane part of the

(*d*) Pſalm xlii. 1, 2. (*e*) Job xxii. 21.

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the world know nothing of it, and therefore are diſpoſed to deride it) is what all pious people feel to be the moſt comfortable reality. And indeed it is much better known by experience than deſcription. We may form ſome Idea of it, by comparing it with that which nearly reſembles it, tho' it falls infinitely ſhort of it in the effects it produces; and that is, the free, mutual, open, and endearing intercourſe there is between two intimate Friends; who have one heart, the ſame views, intereſts, deſigns and ſatisfactions; who cannot give themſelves a greater pleaſure than in pleaſing each other. It is by ſuch reciprocal good offices, and theſe mutual expreſſions and tokens of affection, that human Friendſhips are cultivated and maintained: and when they are founded in real eſteem and ſimilarity of temper, they are then moſt ſolid and invariable. This communion with GOD then is kept up by a frequent holy converſe with him in his word and ordinances, and by ſenſible communications of ſtrength and comfort from him: which is one of the directeſt means to improve that ſpiritual acquaintance

quaintance with him to which our text refers. SERM. VII.

3. This ſaving Knowledge of GOD implies that we live under a *conſtant ſenſe* of him; or a devout and ſerious acknowledgment of his Providence in every thing: that powerful Providence that ſuſtains the material, and that wiſe Providence that governs the moral world. One that knows GOD takes delight to trace the footſteps of his Providence and Wiſdom, in the operations of nature, and the occurrences of life; which to a vain and thoughtleſs mind paſs by unnoticed and diſregarded: and learns many a pious inſtruction from thoſe events, whether publick, private, domeſtick, or perſonal, which the generality of mankind pay no attention to, becauſe they carry their views no further than the ordinary courſe of things. And here indeed lies the great difference between the man that knows GOD, and him that knows him not: the one views and adores him in every thing, the other ſees and owns him in nothing; the one lives as under his eye, the other imagines that GOD ſees him not; or acts as if he thought ſo: the language of his

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heart is, *how doth* GOD *know, is there knowledge in the moſt high (f).*

Laſtly. He that hath a true Knowledge of GOD directs all his chief and governing *regards* to him. He will endeavour to keep well with his fellow Chriſtians, as far as conſcience and duty will admit; but of all things he is moſt concern'd to pleaſe and honour GOD. He not only ſpeaks well of his name and ways, and pays him an external worſhip; but he readily obeys his will, and bows his ſoul in humble ſubjection to the authority of his word and government; and makes it his firſt and principal care, *to do the will of his Father which is in heaven.*

And as this ſteady, uniform, conſcientious obedience to the Will and Commands of GOD, is what Hypocrites and formal Chriſtians cannot endure, who are cheating themſelves with the hopes of a nearer way to heaven, ſo they are very apt to join with the profane part of mankind in deſpiſing it; and, in oppoſition to the whole tenor of Scripture, diſclaiming the neceſſity of it. But they who know GOD, have *better learned*

(f) Pſal. lxxiii. 11.

ed Chriſt: are better principled in the doctrines of the Goſpel; and judge of their Knowledge of GOD by their readineſs to obey him. SERM. VII.

I ſhall conclude this branch of the ſubject with obſerving, that all that hath here been ſaid concerning the Knowledge of GOD, is equally applicable to the Knowledge of Chriſt, which is connected with it in the Text. A perfect and adequate Knowledge of his Divine nature, as the eternal Logos, ineffably united with, and proceeding from the Father; of his Incarnation, and the union of the divine and human nature in the complex Perſon of the God-man mediator, is incompatible to any finite Underſtanding. But there is a juſt and right Knowledge of him, as a divine Prophet ſent of GOD to teach mankind his will; as a Mediator between GOD and man to introduce a new Covenant, better adapted to the ſtate and circumſtances of fallen creatures; and as a ſurety who offered himſelf as a propitiation for their ſins; a knowledge of the ſeveral Characters he ſuſtained, and offices he executed as our Redeemer which are repreſented and deſcribed in Scripture; ſuch a

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Knowledge of Chriſt, I ſay, is attainable; and may be attained under proper advantages even by wicked men. But that Knowledge of him which leads to eternal life, is ſomething more inward, ſpiritual and practical: and, like the Knowledge of GOD, conſiſts in a ſupreme Love to him, in delightful Communion with him, and Communications from him, an habitual impreſſion of his authority over us, and of our dependance upon him, for ſtrength and ſalvation; and an abſolute devotedneſs of our Souls, and all we have, unto him. As all this is comprehended in that ſaving Faith in him which the Goſpel requires, and is the very Soul and Spirit that makes that Faith vital, ſo it is the eſſence of that Knowledge of him which leads to Life eternal.

II. Let us now conſider what are the effects of this Knowledge; or what we are to underſtand by that expreſſion, *this is Life eternal.*

Now this inward and efficacious Knowledge of GOD and *Chriſt*, which I have endeavour'd to repreſent to you, is called *Life eternal*,

eternal, becauſe it is the Principle and Earneſt of it, it fits us for it, and conducts us to it, and is the ſource of all the Happineſs which that Expreſſion denotes. SERM. VII.

1. This ſpiritual and influential Knowledge of GOD and *Chriſt* is called *Life eternal*, becauſe it is the Principle and Earneſt of it. It is heaven begun in the Soul. This heart-felt communion and acquaintance with our Maker and Redeemer, is a ſure mark of the moſt gracious and holy Diſpoſition of mind. And Grace is Glory in its firſt Principle: as ſure a pledge of the heavenly Bliſs, as the living ſeed or ſpringing corn is, of the enſuing crop. And when it riſes to any conſiderable degree, it is the very temper of heaven; and a foretaſte of that Joy which felicitates the inhabitants of that bleſſed world. For, O, what rapture reſults from a clear, unclouded contemplation of the divine excellence! from a free influx and communication of Light and Love and Joy from him! from a conſtant ſenſe and uninterrupted impreſs of his Perfections! and from an unreſtrained, abſolute, and entire devotedneſs of our hearts to him, as our only end; undiſtracted by any other

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objects! This is what we can never expect to enjoy in this world; where we meet with ſo many things that are competitors with him for our hearts; and while theſe hearts are unhappily ſo much inclined to thoſe his Rivals. But ſo far as this Rivalſhip is conquer'd, and our purified underſtanding diſcerns the beauty of Divine excellence, and our affections are directed by its dictates, ſo far are we proficients in this ſaving Knowledge of GOD, and have an inward Earneſt and Pledge of *eternal Life*. But

2. The Knowledge of GOD and of *Chriſt* is called *Life eternal*, becauſe it fits us for it; and is our proper qualification for all that happineſs that is denoted by this expreſſion. Eternal Life is the word by which all the felicity of the heavenly world is uſually expreſs'd in Scripture. Now wherein does that felicity conſiſt, but in the viſion and fruition of the ever bleſſed GOD? i. e. in ſeeing and enjoying him. And what do thoſe terms import? but the full ſatisfaction and joy the bleſſed Soul feels in the immediate preſence of GOD; and in receiving the moſt plentiful communications of light, and ſtrength, and comfort from him. And how

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can that Perſon be capable of this, who has lived all his days ignorant of him, and at laſt dies with a heart alienated from him? But one who finds his chief delight in thinking and meditating on the attributes, ways, and word of GOD, and in communion with him; who lives under an habitual ſenſe of him, devotes himſelf, and refers all his governing views to him, (ſuch a one, I ſay,) hath a Soul already attempered to the buſineſs and bliſs of Heaven. And when he goes out of this world he carries theſe holy diſpoſitions with him as his paſſport for the regions of Glory. He hath placed all his happineſs in GOD here, and therefore may be ſure that GOD will be his happineſs for ever. And this conſcious aſſimilation to GOD, and habitual aptitude and congruity of temper to the Employments and Enjoyments of heaven, give the pious ſoul as full an aſſurance of it, as if he ſaw his own name written in the *Book of life*. SERM. VII.

Which, by the way, ſhews how neceſſary this experimental knowledge of GOD, which conſiſts in a daily communion with him, is, to eſtabliſh the Chriſtian's Hope at Death.

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And a better Hope he cannot have, than that which is thus eſtabliſhed.

3. This Knowledge of GOD and *Chriſt* is called *Life eternal*, becauſe it conducts to it. That is, not only directs and points out the right way to it, but guides, ſtrengthens, and comforts us in that way. The right way to eternal Life, according to the tenor of the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, may poſſibly be diſcerned by thoſe who have no heart in good earneſt to enter upon, and perſevere in it: but that inward influential Knowledge of GOD and *Chriſt*, I have before deſcribed, not only ſhews us the true way to Life, but leads and guides us in it. And the ſame holy Spirit, who implanted this heavenly principle in the Soul, when we are at any time going aſtray (as we are too apt to do) recalls our wandering ſteps, by the outward means of his word and providence, and the inward operations of his grace, ſaying, *this is the way, walk ye in it.*

O, how great a ſatisfaction is it, to be aſſured that we are in the right way to heaven! that every day brings us nearer to everlaſting reſt! A comfort this, which none can enjoy but they who *know GOD.* And

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in proportion as this knowledge, ſo that comfort, increaſes. Whereas they who are unconcerned about this important point, and can produce no proof of this divine acquaintance with their Maker, muſt often feel a painful anxiety of heart when they reflect, that they are every day drawing nearer to Eternity, but know not whether it be to eternal happineſs or eternal miſery. And they whoſe hearts are totally eſtranged from GOD, and ſet againſt him, may be aſſured that their way leads, and that every day brings them nearer, to *eternal Death.* SERM. VII.

4. This Knowledge of GOD and *Chriſt* is called *Life eternal*, becauſe it is the ſource of all the happineſs which that expreſſion denotes. Thus we ſay, the preſence of GOD is heaven. By which we mean, it is the fountain from whence flows all the happineſs of the heavenly world. Could we conceive GOD to be abſent from Heaven, Heaven itſelf would then be no longer a happy ſtate. So were it poſſible for one who is a ſtranger to GOD to enter into heaven, he could not be happy there. He would pine away in the midſt of Bliſs: he would be uneaſy in eternal reſt: he would be weary

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weary of Paradice; and the pleaſure of it would give him pain. The reaſon is, becauſe the taſte and temper of his ſoul is not ſuited to the entertainments of the place. He hath no faculties to take in pleaſures ſo exquiſite and refined: they are what he was always unuſed to, unfit for, and incable of. They are all as unſuitable to his capacity and taſte, and therefore as far from contributing to his happineſs, as the delicacies of a royal Banquet are to that of a ſwine: and as inſipid and tedious, as the charms of ſcience are to the underſtaning of an Ideot.

Having thus particularly ſhewn you, what that Knowledge of GOD is that is intended in the Text, and in what reſpects it may be called *eternal Life*, I ſhall take up the remainder of your time in making ſome Reflections on this ſubject.

The Knowledge of GOD and *Chriſt* is the firſt principle of Piety; and the foundation of all the Virtues that flow from it. Hence we learn

1. That an Ignorance of GOD is the firſt principle of Impiety; and the foundation of all the wickedneſs that ſprings from thence.

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This is undeniable; for he that knows not GOD, who is unmindful of his Maker and Redeemer, or *lives without GOD in the world*, is neither ſolicitous to pleaſe him, nor afraid to offend him. Having no inward principle of Gratitude to excite him to obedience, nor of holy Fear to reſtrain him from diſobedience, he is not only expoſed, but diſpoſed to all manner of iniquity. Has nothing to counterballance his vicious propenſions, or to be his guard and defence againſt the temptations he is daily beſet with; and is therefore an eaſy and willing Captive to the great enemy of Souls. This is the true ſource and original of that abounding wickedneſs, and of all thoſe enormous deviations from the ways of Righteouſneſs and Religion, which we ſee ſo common among the profane part of mankind. They never think of GOD, and therefore are unconcerned about their conduct, and the conſequences of it: and fooliſhly imagine that he is as unmindful of them, as they are of him; that he takes no more care of the honour of his Laws, than they do to conform their conduct to them. Had men but a right ſenſe of GOD, and were they but

ſeriouſly

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ſeriouſly to think how pure and holy a Being he is, they would ſoon ſee what *an evil and bitter thing* it is to offend him; and tremble at the proſpect of that danger they expoſe themſelves to, by thoſe ſins which they now make a boaſt of. And as GOD and ſin are the two greateſt oppoſites in the Univerſe, men can never attain to a right ſenſe of the one, till they come to a true knowledge of the other.

2. I obſerve, that a wilful and continued Ignorance of GOD is eternal Death; in the ſame ſenſe in which a practical knowledge of him is eternal Life. That is, it is the principle and earneſt of it; it fits men for, and leads them to it; and will be the ſource of all that miſery which they ſuffer in the future world.

For how can it be otherwiſe? GOD is the ſole Fountain of Bliſs to the univerſe: from whence flow all thoſe little ſtreams of happineſs, which, in various degrees and meaſures, refreſh and felicitate the ſeveral parts of the moral world. Now to be cut off from all communication with this fountain of Bliſs, what muſt be the conſequence but barrenneſs, miſery, and inevitable deſtruction?

tion? this must therefore necessarily be the case of those who, through the ignorance and wickedness of their hearts, are alienated from GOD. And what will be the dreadful Doom of such impious and refractory men, the Apostle tells us, in those words which contain the most terrible commination that is to be found in the whole Book of GOD, 2 *Thess.* i. 7, &c. *The Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty Angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not GOD, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.* This dreadful threatning is denounced against them *who know not GOD, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:* which stand here as similar characters; or a description of the same sort of men. For as the Knowledge of GOD implies a willing obedience to the Gospel of Christ, so a practical and obstinate ignorance of him infers a wilful violation of all its holy Laws.

3. We

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3. We may learn, from what hath been ſaid upon this Subject, what is the firſt ſpring or foundation of this fatal ignorance of GOD. It ariſes from a forgetfulneſs of him: and therefore they that *forget GOD* are in Scripture placed in the ſame rank with them that *know him not*. If a man ſeldom or never ſeriouſly thinks of GOD; if the moſt awful Providences, and the moſt awakening Warnings excite no pious reflections in his mind; if he avoids all opportunities and occaſions of converſing with him in his works, and word, and ordinances; he muſt of courſe live a ſtranger to his Maker all his days. Thus in their hearts the wicked ſay unto him, *depart from us, we deſire not the knowledge of thy ways*. To whom he will in his turn another day ſay, *depart from me I know you not*.

And how is it poſſible for a man to come to the Knowledge of that which he deſires not to think of; and avoids all opportunities of being acquainted with? And this, we ſee, is actually the caſe and character of thoſe *who live without GOD in the world*.—Poor creatures! how will they live without him in the other world!—But

4. We

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4. We hence alſo ſee what is the firſt ſpring of that ſaving Knowledge of GOD which we have now been deſcribing. We muſt often think of him.—And can we turn our thoughts to a ſublimer Subject?—think what he is in himſelf, what he is to us; what he is in *Jeſus Chriſt*.

We ſhould often contemplate him in his works and in his providences. And whatever we ſee, whatever we hear in the world (if the mind be piouſly diſpoſed) may properly turn our thoughts to GOD; without whoſe power, this world had never been; without-whoſe wiſdom it had been a *Chaos* of confuſion and darkneſs; and without whoſe providence, it would ſtill be a ſcene of univerſal anarchy and deſolation.

We ſhould often converſe with him in his Word, where we read the expreſs characters and moſt lively deſcriptions of thoſe attributes of unbounded Power, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs, that are ſo perfectly exemplified in his Ways and Works. And we ſhould often view and review the glories of his nature, as they ſhine amiably upon us in the face and perſon of *Jeſus Chriſt* his Son;

who

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who is the brightneſs of his Glory, and the expreſs Image of his perſon.

And above all we muſt direct our daily and fervent Prayers to GOD, that he would teach us the true Knowledge of himſelf, and *Jeſus Chriſt* his Son: that he who cauſed primæval light to ſhine out of darkneſs, would illuminate our dark minds with the rays of heavenly wiſdom; *and ſhine into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of GOD, in the face of Jeſus Chriſt.* And thus ſhall we attain that ſaving Knowledge of GOD now, which will fit us for the everlaſting enjoyment of him hereafter.

And now, is there any knowledge in the world comparable to this (*a*)? Is not all the knowledge in the world without this mere folly? miſerable ignorance! Can we be content to live any longer deſtitute of this moſt

(*a*) *How vaſt a difference is there between the Wiſdom of a mortified pious man, enlighten'd from above; and the pompous Learning of a profound and ſtudious Divine! That knowledge which is from above ſpeaks its heavenly original by marvellous and noble effects; and works a greater Change in the man, a greater Improvement in profitable Knowledge, than all that comprehenſion which the beſt capacities and moſt indefatigable Induſtry can ever attain.*

Tho. a Kemp. Book iii. ch. 36.

most neceſſary and important Knowledge? this firſt principle of Wiſdom and Happineſs? If we know not GOD, what will all our other knowledge avail us? If we know him, in that effectual ſaving manner now deſcribed, it matters not what we are ignorant of. They that thus know GOD will be found the wiſeſt men at laſt. And let us always remember that it is only by this ſerious, humble, reverend, conſtant, practical regard to him, that we can aſcertain to ourſelves this true Knowledge of him. *Hereby do we* KNOW *that we know him, if we keep his Commandments.* SERM. VII.

The HYMN.

I.

Shine forth eternal ſource of light,
And make thy glories known;
Fill our enlarg'd adoring ſight
With luſtre all thine own.

II.

Vain are the charms, and faint the rays
The brighteſt creatures boaſt;
And all their grandeur and their praiſe
Are in thy preſence loſt.

III.

To know the author of our frame
Is our ſublimeſt ſkill:
True ſcience is to read thy name,
True life t' obey thy will.

IV.

For this I long, for this I pray,
And following on purſue,
'Till viſions of eternal day
Fix and compleat the view.

SERMON VIII.

Our Love to GOD.

MAT. xxii. 37.

------ *Thou ſhalt love the* LORD *thy* GOD *with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind.*

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THE *Divine* Virtues, or thoſe ſeveral holy diſpoſitions which we ſhould carefully cultivate towards GOD, are founded in the perfections of his nature, and flow from the relation we bear to him as his rational and dependent creatures.

If we know GOD, we know that he is a moſt merciful, moſt righteous, and moſt wiſe Being. Thoſe diſpoſitions in us which correſpond to theſe perfections in him, are

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Love, and Fear, and Truſt. And as reaſonable creatures, for ever dependent on our Maker, we are bound to adore and ſerve him with all our rational capacities, and ſeek to him for all we want.

So that the *Divine* virtues, or the ſeveral leading Duties of piety, are theſe *ſix:* to *know*, to *love*, to *fear* GOD; to *truſt* in him, to *obey* him, and to keep up a conſtant communion with him by *Prayer*.

The firſt of theſe, the *Knowledge* of GOD, as the foundation of all the reſt, was the ſubject of the preceding Diſcourſe. And conſidered as a principle of piety, it conſiſts not only in forming right ſentiments of the perfections of GOD (which perſons not animated with pious affections towards him may be able to do) but chiefly in the genuine effects of thoſe ſentiments; or an inward, influential, practical acquaintance with him: which alone will fit us for, and conduct us to, *eternal Life*.

Now when we ſet ourſelves ſeriouſly to contemplate the nature, and review the perfections of the Divine Being, the firſt idea that offers itſelf to our minds, is that of his infinite *Goodneſs*. A perfection which ſhines with

with ſuper-eminent luſtre in all his Works, and is diſtinguiſh'd with peculiar marks of glory in his Word. Anſwerable to this perfection in him, is that pious diſpoſition of *Love* and Gratitude which it demands of us. SERM. VIII.

A ſupreme *Love* to GOD then, as the ſecond main branch of Piety, is the ſubject of the preſent Diſcourſe. The words I have choſen for the foundation of it are an Anſwer to the queſtion that was put to our Saviour by a certain Lawyer or jewiſh Doctor, who aſk'd him, *which was the great* or principal *Commandment in the Law?* This was a ſubject much debated among the Rabbies: ſome affirming it was the Law of Sacrifice, others that of Circumciſion, others that of the Sabbath. But our Lord, not willing to intermeddle in that Controverſy, refers them to a Law which they had all forgot; and to the ſpirit of which they were utter ſtrangers; namely, that of a pure, ſupreme, unrival'd Love to GOD their Maker.

This Law to which he refers them is found in *Deut.* vi. 5. *Thou ſhalt love the* LORD *thy* GOD *with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy might.* Theſe

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words vary from thoſe of the text only in this; *viz.* that clauſe in the Law, *with all thy* MIGHT, is in the Goſpel render'd, *with all thy* MIND. St. *Luke* retains both the expreſſions (*Luke* x. 27.) *thou ſhalt love the* LORD *thy* GOD *with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy ſtrength, and with all thy mind.* St. *Mark* has it juſt as it ſtands in *Deuteronomy*, (*Mark* xii. 30.) The proper force of each of theſe expreſſions I ſhall particularly enquire into by and by: and ſhall only further obſerve here, that our Saviour, in fixing upon this as the chief point in the Law, hath at the ſame time recommended it as the great command of the Goſpel.

In treating this Subject, I propoſe

I. To make ſome brief obſervations on this affection of Love in general.

II. Conſider what it more particularly denotes, when GOD is the immediate Object of it.

III. How

III. How we are to expreſs our Love to him: or how we may know that we do indeed love him in the manner he requires.

I. I am to make ſome brief obſervations on this affection of Love in general.

Love is the moſt delightful, and at the ſame time the moſt complicated paſſion in the human nature. It may be divided into theſe *four* kinds.

1. A Love of Benevolence and Compaſſion. So we are to love all mankind: even the moſt unworthy and the moſt miſerable. This in us, is call'd *Humanity*; in GOD, *Philanthropy*. In this ſenſe the GOD of mercy loves all his creatures; and requires us to love our Enemies.

2. There is a love of Tenderneſs and Inſtinct. So we love thoſe in whom we ſee any thing agreeable and attractive, though much inferior to us in age and underſtanding. Thus Parents love their infant offſpring: this is commonly call'd *natural affection*.

3. There is a love of Complacency or rational Delight: founded not only on what is in itſelf excellent and agreeable, but on a certain ſimilarity and agreement of taſte, temper and diſpoſition. Thus we love our Friends: and ſo GOD loves all good men; who bear his holy image, and whoſe will is entirely conform'd to his.

Laſtly. There is a love of Reverence, Gratitude and Eſteem, ſuch as children bear to their parents; or an ingenuous perſon to his ſuperior friend and benefactor. This love in the higheſt degree we owe to GOD, and is that virtue which the text ſo emphatically recommends.

Theſe, you may eaſily perceive, are different ſenſations of the mind, tho' in our language are all comprehended under the common appellation of Love. But

II. Let us now more particularly conſider, what we are to underſtand by this affection, when the great GOD is the immediate object of it.

It conſiſts, as I have juſt obſerv'd, in the higheſt Reverence, Gratitude, and Eſteem.—

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The higheſt *Reverence*, as he is our Father; the former of our body, and the parent of our immortal mind: and continues and preſerves *both* in being, by his power and at his pleaſure.—We owe him likewiſe our higheſt *Gratitude*; becauſe he is a moſt indulgent parent to us; our conſtant, kind and ever-preſent friend.—And he is finally the object of our ſuperlative *Eſteem*; as the ſource and centre of all poſſible excellence: the ſource from whence all goodneſs flows, and the centre in whom all perfections meet. SERM. VIII.

And this ſupreme Reverence, Gratitude, and Eſteem, which are due to the ever-bleſſed GOD, and in which our Love to him doth conſiſt, muſt be exercis'd and expreſs'd by all the faculties and powers of our minds, and every capacity of our rational nature: or as it is in the text, *with all our heart, and with all our Soul, and with all our mind.*

1. We are required to love the Lord our GOD *with all our heart.* The Heart is put for the ſeat of the affections, and as ſuch it denotes the intenſeneſs and ardor of our Love to GOD; as alſo the ſincerity and ſupremacy of it. Other things we are allow'd to love, in

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in a ſubordinate degree, with the ſame kind of Love which we owe to GOD in the higheſt. That is, we may and ought to reverence our earthly parents, and ſuperiors, ſhew our ſelves grateful to our friends and benefactors, and eſteem whatſoever is excellent and praiſe-worthy: but though he permit us to pay them theſe honourable regards, he will not admit them to be his Rivals in our heart. Our *ſupreme* Reverence, Gratitude, and Eſteem, are due to him alone: and the Love we bear to our deareſt friends on earth, ſhould bear no compariſon with that which we owe to our almighty Father and dear Redeemer in heaven: becauſe there is no compariſon between the Objects. To this purpoſe, ſee our Lord's own expreſs words, *Mat.* x. 37; and more ſtrongly, *Luke* xiv. 26.

2. We are commanded to love the Lord our GOD, not only with all our Heart, but *with all our Soul.* The original word (ψυχη) properly ſignifies the principle of animal Life; and figuratively the ſeat of Appetite or Deſire. This expreſſion therefore, being added to the former, ſhews, that our reverence and gratitude for the ever-bleſſed GOD, muſt not only be ſincere, ſupreme and unrivall'd,

rivall'd, but attended with the moſt earneſt Deſire to pleaſe and enjoy him. It is an eſſential property of Love, to wiſh to pleaſe and enjoy it's object; but when GOD is the Object, that Deſire muſt be, like himſelf, ſupreme and unparallel'd.

3. We are required to love the Lord our GOD, not only with all our heart and ſoul, but *with all our Mind.* What we are to underſtand by this expreſſion, we learn from St. *Mark* in the parallel paſſage (*Mark* xii. 30); where, when our Saviour had told the Lawyer (who is there called one of the Scribes) that the firſt and great Command was, *thou ſhalt love the Lord thy* GOD, *with with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind,* the Scribe replied; *Well, Maſter, thou haſt ſaid the truth; for there is one* GOD, *and none other but he; and to love him with all the heart, and with all the ſoul, and with all the* UNDERSTANDING, *is more than all whole Burnt-offerings and Sacrifices.* So that by that expreſſion *with all thy Mind,* this Scribe took our Saviour's meaning to be, *with all thy* UNDERSTANDING. And ſo indeed the original word properly ſignifies. This implies then, that our reaſon

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ſon and judgment ſhould lead the affection: or that we ſhould employ all our rational, inquiſitive and intellectual powers in the ſtudy and contemplation of the Divine perfections, in order to attain a better Knowledge of GOD: and the more we know him, the more we ſhall love him.

Laſtly, St. *Mark* adds, in the place juſt now cited, *with all thy might*, or with all thy *ſtrength*. And ſo it is in the Law, (*Lev.* vi. 5.) from whence this paſſage is taken. By which we are to underſtand in general, that all our active powers, both of body and mind, are to be employed in his ſervice; as a proper teſtimony of this our ſupreme and undiſſembled Love to him.

Such are the reverential, grateful, and honourable regards, that are due from us and every rational creature in the univerſe, to our common Lord and Maker.—

III. The next and principal thing I propos'd was, to conſider how we are to expreſs our Love to GOD; or how we may know that we do indeed love him in the manner he requires.

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As this is a matter of very great and ſerious concern, I ſhall endeavour to proceed in it with all the caution and perſpicuity the importance of it requires.

And as ſome may doubt whether they love GOD at all; and others who have ſome good hope they do, yet doubt whether they love him in that ſuperlative manner the text requires; I ſhall therefore ſpeak to each of theſe caſes diſtinctly.

1. How muſt we know that our love to GOD is real?

I anſwer, the ſame way by which we know our Love to our Friends is ſo.—We ſhew our Love to *them*, by endeavouring to render ourſelves agreeable to them; by delighting to do what we know will pleaſe them; and avoiding what we apprehend to be offenſive to them; by ſerving their Intereſt; entering into their Views; and by keeping up a free and intimate Intercourſe with them. If in the ſame manner we ſhew our Love to GOD, we may be ſure it is ſincere.

Do we deſire to render our ſelves agreeable to him? This can only be done by endeavouring to be like him; by imitating his moral perfections. It is natural for every thing

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thing to love its likeneſs. If therefore we bear the impreſſion of the Divine Image, we may be ſure that we are the objects of the Divine Love; and if our great concern be, to be more like to GOD, we may be ſure that he is the chief object of ours.

Again, do we delight to do his Will?—With what readineſs do we execute the Orders of one we love! not only becauſe they proceed from his regard to us, but give us an opportunity of teſtifying ours to him.

And the ſame Love that prompts to a ready compliance with every thing that is pleaſing to its object, will equally reſtrain from whatever is offenſive to it. And therefore, a conſtant and conſcientious care to avoid all Sin, becauſe we know it is diſpleaſing to GOD, is a no leſs certain teſtimony of our Love to him, than a ready obedience to his poſitive Commands. We may ſafely judge then of our Love to GOD, by our Hatred of, and care to avoid, whatever offends him.

Again, intimate friends have not only the ſame heart, but the ſame views, aims, intereſt and ends. Truth and Righteouſneſs are the great ends which we ſee GOD is carrying

rying on in the world, by his ſpiritual miniſtrations and providential government; as moſt ſubſervient to his Glory and the Happineſs of his creatures: if then we heartily concur with him in this grand Deſign, we ſhew our ſelves the Friends of GOD, and prove the ſincerity of our Love to him. SERM. VIII.

Finally, Friends delight to converſe together; to keep up a free and intimate intercourſe with each other. A long abſence gives them pain; which they endeavour to alleviate by a punctual Correſpondence.—Let us try our Love to GOD by this Teſt. Do we long to enjoy his preſence? love to wait upon him in his ordinances? and earneſtly deſire (as *David* did) to *ſee the out-goings of* GOD *in his ſanctuary?* to converſe with him by faith and prayer; and hear him ſpeak to our ſouls by his word and Spirit? Is this our chief joy, and moſt delightful entertainment, as it was that of the pious *Pſalmiſt?* And do we love to meditate the Divine perfections, not only at the ſtated ſeaſons of worſhip, but at other times; whenever we meet with any particular objects, events or occurrences that are ſuited to excite a pious reflection and raiſe the heart to GOD? — if,

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I ſay, we find it thus with us, it is a certain ſign that the prevailing diſpoſition or deſire of our heart is towards GOD.

But now 'tis very poſſible that many good Chriſtians may find ſomething of this in them; from whence they draw this comfortable concluſion, that they hope their Love to GOD and Chriſt is ſincere. 'But 'this does not come up to all that the text 'requires. In this manner they love their 'friends, and by this means they know they 'do. But we are requir'd to love the bleſſed 'GOD infinitely more than them; *with all 'our hearts, and with all our ſouls, and with 'all our mind, and with all our might.* And 'he deſerves that we ſhould. Nay our Lord 'himſelf hath told us, that if we love 'the deareſt friend or neareſt relation in life 'more than him, *we are not worthy of him.* 'But he hath ſo many Rivals in our heart! 'there are ſo many things in the world 'which we feel we love, and which we can-'not help loving. How can we, after all, 'be ſure that our Love to him is ſo far ſu-'perior to that which we bear to any earthly 'object, as he requires it; and as in all rea-

'ſon

'ſon it ought, to be?'—This now is our ſecond enqniry; *viz.* SERM. VIII.

2. How muſt we know that our Love to GOD is ſuperlative, or far greater than that we bear to any created object?

Now in this caſe, the following ſingle conſideration, I think, is ſufficient to give us all the ſatisfaction we want, *viz.*

That it is poſſible we may love GOD with a more ſolid and rational eſteem and reverence, than any earthly object, tho' it be not with ſo warm and ſenſible affection. For, as I before obſerv'd, a real love to GOD hath ſomething in its own nature different from, and ſuperior to that love which we bear to earthly objects.

It is a great miſtake to think that our love to GOD is always to be meaſur'd by that ardor and fervency of ſpirit with which ſome are affected when they think or ſpeak of him. A good deal of this may be conſtitutional, owing to a natural complexion. Fervent affections are no more certain a criterion of a ſuperior Love to GOD, that a warm Zeal is of ſuperior attainments in true Piety. Young perſons and new Converts commonly diſcover the greateſt warmth of

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affection: but we ought not to think that therefore they love GOD more than an aged experienced Saint, who hath ſpent his whole life in his Service; tho' he does not find his heart ſo much warm'd, or his paſſions ſo ſenſibly mov'd in his pious and devotional exerciſes, as the other does. His Love to GOD may be more ſolid, rational, deep and durable, tho' not ſo ardent and flaming. A ſteady fire, tho' it burns not ſo bright, yet gives a better heat than a ſudden tranſient flame.

The Religion of an experienc'd and advanced Chriſtian (and conſequently his Love to GOD, which is the very ſoul and ſpirit of Religion) does not conſiſt ſo much in rapturous affection, as in the uniform and regular exerciſe of the more noble powers of the mind, the reaſon and underſtanding, in his devotional employments. In a word, if he cannot ſo ſenſibly find that he loves GOD *with all his heart, and with all his ſoul*, yet he knows he loves him *with all his Mind, and with all his Might*.

This conſideration I wou'd recommend as a very material one; not only, becauſe I apprehend it goes to the very foundation of the

the Scruple before-mentioned, but for want of a due attention to it many have fallen into miſtakes on both ſides: I mean, ſome have been ready to doubt, whether they love GOD ſupremely and ſincerely for want of theſe fervent emotions of mind; whilſt others, who feel them, have built too much upon them. SERM. VIII.

But if this be not thought ſufficient of itſelf to remove the Doubt objected, I would propoſe two things more.

1. If you doubt whether you love GOD more than your deareſt earthly friend or comfort, aſk your ſelf, whether you can be content to part with your intereſt in GOD, for the ſake of that earthly comfort you are afraid you prefer before him. If you cannot bear that Thought, but find that you would with all your heart give up your deareſt enjoyment in life, at the call of GOD, and as a teſtimony of your ſuperior love to him; this is a certain ſign, that tho' your regard to that dear object may moſt ſenſibly affect you, yet your regard to GOD is much greater. He that is willing to give up all for GOD, certainly ſhews that he loves GOD above all.

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2. Do you rejoice in GOD, not only when the light of his countenance ſhines upon you, but when darkneſs and diſtreſs overwhelm you; and find in him more than you loſe in the want of all your worldly bleſſings? He is without doubt the ſupreme object of your Love, when you can ſay with the prophet, *Though the fig-tree ſhould not bloſſom, and there be no fruit on the vine; though the labour of the olive ſhould fail, and the fields ſhould yield no meat; though the flocks ſhould be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the ſtall; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the GOD of my ſalvation (a).*

Theſe are the Thoughts I had to offer upon the ſecond main principle of Piety; the Love of GOD: the ſpring of all acceptable religion, as well as the ſource of all our future Bliſs.

And now, how much concern'd ſhould we all be to have this Love of GOD *dwelling in us!* as a fixt permanent principle, to warm and animate our devotions! to direct our thoughts and contemplations more frequently to that moſt excellent and beſt of Beings; whoſe favour is the *fountain of Life!*—To this end let

(a) Hab. iii. 17, 18.

let us frequently and more intently turn our thoughts unto him: and conſider

1. How infinitely and every way worthy he is of our ſupreme regard. How good he is in himſelf: how much goodneſs he has diffuſed throughout our world: with how laviſh a hand he ſcatters his bounties among all his creatures: loading even the unthankful and evil with the fruits of his beneficence: whoſe name is Love, whoſe nature is goodneſs, and whoſe *tender mercies are over all his works.*

2. Let us often think how good he hath been to us; how well he hath provided for our eternal intereſt; in giving his Son to die for us, his Spirit to ſanctify us, his Word to direct us, his Ordinances to comfort and inſtruct us; and who is continually calling us by his Word, his Spirit and his Providences, to love and truſt and honour him, by giving our hearts to him. It is the only thing he expects from us in return for all the kind things he hath done for us. — And where can we diſpoſe of them to more advantage? Can we withhold our hearts from him, who withheld not his Son, his own dear Son, from us! in whom he hath promis'd to

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give us all things that are neceſſary to make us happy both for time and eternity!

Moreover, is he not our Father? the kind indulgent Parent of our ſpirit! who is continually doing us good; and deſires only our conſent (that is, our Love) to make us happy for ever.

'O my labouring ſoul, ſtrive then to conceive (for 'tis impoſſible to expreſs) what an immenſe Debt of Gratitude thou oweſt to him, who by his creating Goodneſs call'd thee out of nothing, to make thee a partaker of Reaſon; and even a ſharer of Immortality with himſelf: who, by his preſerving Goodneſs, deſigns to conduct thee ſafe through the various ſtages of thine eternal exiſtence: and who, by his redeeming Goodneſs, hath prepared for thee a Happineſs too big for the comprehenſion of a human underſtanding!'

But after all, his Grace alone can draw our hearts to, and centre our ſouls in him. And therefore

Laſtly. Let this be the ſubject of our frequent, humble and earneſt prayer to GOD; to teach us to know him more, that we may love him better; enjoy ſome aſſured token of

of his Love to us, and finally be made to drink of the *river of his pleaſures*, which flow from the *fountain of Life*; and poſſeſs that *fulneſs of Joy which is at his right hand for evermore.* SERM. VIII.

The HYMN.

I.

Great GOD of love!—that charming name
Should all my powers controul;
Should make my beſt affections flame
And kindle all my ſoul.

II.

Nor I, nor Angels round the throne
Can love to what's thy due:
Beauties divine to them unknown,
Paſs all they have in view.

III.

When they have ſtretch'd their wings for flight,
The ſteep aſcent to try;
Struck with the vaſt and boundleſs height,
In wonder loſt they lie.

IV.

Yet they for ever wonder on
And gaze with high delight;
And love the Infinite unknown,
With all their mind and might.

V.

I too would lift mine eyes to ſee
What Angels can't explore;
With fixt attention gaze at thee,
And wonder and adore.

VI.

O, draw mine eyes, my heart inflame,
With love fill up my ſoul:
Let this affection reign ſupreme,
And all my powers controul.

SERMON IX.

The Fear of GOD.

GEN. xlii. 18.

----- *I fear* GOD.

THE firſt thing neceſſary to make a real Chriſtian is, to know what it is to be one; wherein the true chriſtian temper conſiſts; or what are the genuine characteriſticks of *Chriſt's* true Diſciples. Theſe we are particularly tracing out from the ſacred Scriptures; that we may not be, what the greateſt part of the Chriſtian world are (and I am afraid I may ſay the Proteſtant world too) ignorant of the very character we profeſs to bear; and what is eſſential to the happineſs we hope to enjoy. SERM. IX.

The true Chriſtian character I propoſed to conſider in *four* views: as it hath reſpect

to

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to ourſelves, to GOD, to *Chriſt*, and to our fellow Creatures. The firſt comprehending, what are commonly called, the *human*; the ſecond, the *divine*; the third, the *chriſtian*; and the fourth, the *ſocial* Virtues.

The chriſtian temper or character, as it hath reſpect unto ourſelves, or the *human* Virtues, are theſe ſix; Humility, Contentment, Prudence, Patience, Fortitude, and Self-government: all which I have diſtinctly conſider'd.

The chriſtian temper or character, as it hath reſpect unto GOD, or the *divine* Virtues, may likewiſe be comprehended under *ſix* heads, *viz.* to know, to love, to fear, and truſt him, to obey him, and keep up a conſtant intercourſe and communion with him by meditation and prayer.

The two firſt of theſe, *viz.* the *Knowledge* and *Love* of GOD, I have already particularly conſidered. The next *divine* Grace which comes in order to be treated of, is the *Fear* of GOD.

And ſince all the Divine virtues, or the duties we owe to GOD, are nothing more than the conformity of our Temper and Behaviour to the eſſential perfections of his Nature

Nature and his relation to us, therefore as that ſupreme Love to him, which I treated of in the preceding Diſcourſe, ariſes from the contemplation of his infinite Goodneſs and Mercy, ſo that holy Fear of GOD, which is our preſent ſubject, ſprings from another view of him; as a Being of Almighty Power and Majeſty: before whom we are but as duſt and aſhes: atoms of vital earth: nothing: *leſs than nothing, and vanity.* SERM. IX.

The words I have read were ſpoken by *Joſeph* to his Brethren; to aſſure them of the certainty of what he then declared; that if they would not go and bring back with them their younger Brother *Benjamin*, and in the mean time leave one of themſelves as a Hoſtage, or ſecurity for their return, they ſhould be deemed and treated as Spies. He had before inſiſted that only one ſhould go and fetch their younger Brother, and that all the reſt ſhould be left as Hoſtages; as the only proof he would accept of their veracity: confirming what he ſaid by ſwearing twice by the life of *Pharaoh*. In this ſecond propoſal he mitigates the rigour of the firſt; and confirms his words by (what he thought would ſtrike them more than his

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his former oath, which was the profane language then in faſhion at Court) aſſuring them that (whatever they might think of him) though a Courtier in *Egypt*, he knew, adored, and feared the ſame GOD as they did. And calls him to witneſs to the truth and ſincerity of his Intentions: this do, and live (ſays he) *for I fear GOD.*

That I may give you a more diſtinct and comprehenſive view of this branch of Piety, I ſhall

I. Shew you what we are to underſtand by it.

II. Whence it ariſes.

III. In what inſtances it more eſpecially diſcovers itſelf. And then conclude

IV. With a few practical Reflections.

I. I am to ſhew you what we are to underſtand by *the Fear of GOD.*

It may ſeem at firſt view to be incompatible with that pious Diſpoſition I have before been treating of, *viz.* the *Love* of GOD: and eſpecially as the Apoſtle *John* ſets theſe two

two things in oppoſition, and as inconſiſtent with one another, 1 *John* iv. 8. *There is no fear in love; but perfect love caſteth out fear; becauſe fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.* SERM. IX.

Here then we muſt diſtinguiſh (and the diſtinction is very eaſy and obvious) between a filial and a ſervile Fear: ſuch a fear as a child hath of a kind and tender Father; and ſuch a fear as a ſlave hath of a cruel and tyrannical Maſter. The firſt is Reverence, or Fear ſweetned with Love: the other is Dread, or Fear attended with Terror. In the former ſenſe, the Saints fear and rejoice; in the latter the Devils *fear and tremble.* The one is attended with joy, the other with torment: the firſt is the great principle of Religion, the laſt is the effect of Impiety. It is the *laſt* of theſe the Apoſtle *John* means, when he ſays *there is no fear in Love:* that is, no ſervile fear; or no ſuch fear as *hath torment.* But it is the *former* that we are now ſpeaking of, *viz.* a filial or reverential fear: which is not only conſiſtent with Love, but inſeparable from it. This appears from hence, becauſe we are required to fear the Lord on that very account for which we

ought

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ought to love him. *There is forgiveneſs with thee, that thou mayeſt be fear'd* (*r*); *fear the Lord and his goodneſs* (*s*). He is not only great *and greatly to be feared*; but he is good, and *therefore* greatly to be feared. And the more kind and gracious he is to us, the more ſhould we fear him: that is, the more afraid ſhould we be of offending him: becauſe the greater will be our ingratitude therein. And that very Love which his goodneſs excites in us, will increaſe that fear of ſin, and be our guard againſt it. So that this filial Fear of GOD, ariſes out of a filial Love to him; and grows up with it.

That *Fear of GOD*, which we are now treating of, is ſuch a conſtant reverend regard to GOD, as our Father and Friend, deeply impreſs'd upon our Spirits, as will produce the moſt dutiful Diſpoſition and Behaviour towards him. And by reaſon of this its great and extenſive influence, it is more frequently put to comprehend the whole of Religion than any other branch of Piety whatſoever. Which you cannot fail to obſerve in reading the holy Scriptures; and

(*r*) Pſal. cxxx. 4. (*s*) Hoſ. iii. 5.

and eſpecially the books of *Pſalms* and *Proverbs*. SERM. IX.

II. Let us now conſider whence this habitual Reverence of GOD ariſes.

That it is the effect of the holy Spirit's grace and operation in the heart, we cannot doubt. For as he is the *giver of every good Gift*, ſo he is the Author of all that is ſpiritually good within us. And therefore they that fear the Lord, are always moſt ready to aſcribe to him the honour of thus turning their hearts unto him.

But under his gracious influence and conduct this pious Diſpoſition ariſes more particularly.

1. From right, regular, juſt, and honourable ſentiments of the Divine Attributes and Perfections; as they are repreſented, and clearly diſcover'd, to us in his Word and Works. For, as I before obſerved, all the duties and diſpoſitions of Piety ſpring from, and are founded in, a right Knowledge of GOD. He that is groſsly ignorant of GOD, or entertains falſe and injurious conceptions of his Attributes, cannot be uniformly influenced

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fluenced by that Fear of him which I have now deſcribed, and which he requires. For inſtance, if we repreſent him to our ſelves as a hard Maſter; exacting more of us, and expecting more from us, than he hath given us power to perform; if we conceive of him as a capricious, partial, cruel, and tyrannical Being; and explain his Sovereignty, or any particular doctrine of Scripture, in ſuch a manner as naturally leads to ſuch ſentiments of him; we ſhall fear him indeed, but it will be with a painful and ſlaviſh fear: with a fear that hath in it more of dread, than delight: very far from that filial and reverential complacency, which his paternal condeſcenſion and goodneſs invite; and which his word expreſsly requires.

And this divine grace of holy Fear ariſes, not ſo much from the contemplation of one or two of his perfections ſeparately conſidered, as from all of them connected and conjoin'd. Filial Reverence is compoſed of Fear and Love. And therefore to excite our Fear, we ſhould often turn our thoughts to his awful Majeſty, and incomprehenſible Glories: before whom the Ocean is but as a *drop in the Bucket*, and the Earth but as *a*

ſmall

ſmall duſt in the Ballance; and all things *as nothing and vanity*. We ſhould often contemplate his almighty Power, his inflexible Juſtice, his unblemiſh'd Purity, his perfect Holineſs, his invariable Truth, and eternal Righteouſneſs. But then, to temper this Fear (which ſuch thoughts of GOD are apt to raiſe in our minds) with Love, we ſhould repreſent him, at the ſame time, to ourſelves as the Father of mercies, who glories moſt of all in his goodneſs; remember his great compaſſion to the infirmities of his children (which his word ſets forth in the moſt endearing terms) his paternal tenderneſs and readineſs to relieve all our wants: and eſpecially that myſterious and unparallelled act of Love, in ſending his own Son into our world, incarnate, to redeem us by his Death. And the Love and Gratitude which theſe ſentiments of GOD are adapted to excite, will ſo ſoften and temper that Fear of him which the contemplation of his power and juſtice creates, as to turn it into a filial and complacential Reverence; which is the grace I am now deſcribing. SERM. IX.

But let it be obſerv'd, that it is not a few ſuperficial or tranſient thoughts of theſe di-

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vine Perfections, that will produce this happy effect; but our meditations on them muſt be frequent, ſerious, fixt, intent, and earneſt. This ſhould be the daily employment of our minds; and attended with humble Prayer, that theſe divine contemplations may be ſo directed, aſſiſted and enliven'd by the holy Spirit, as to beget, quicken, and eſtabliſh this pious diſpoſition in us.

2. To inſpire our minds with a holy reverence of the great GOD, let us turn our eyes to the multitude and magnificence of his Works. Even thoſe that fall under our view, raiſe our aſtoniſhment beyond meaſure. But, alas, how ſmall a portion of their infinitude can our contracted ken take in; even when our ſight is abſorbed, in a ſtarry evening, amidſt the numberleſs ſhining Worlds above us! But our imagination is much more loſt, when we reflect (as we often ſhould when we view the works of nature) 'that of all theſe things there muſt 'be one *firſt* cauſe. For nothing could 'make itſelf. This firſt Cauſe then muſt 'be unmade: or *neceſſarily* exiſtent. That is, 'He muſt have exiſted by a neceſſity of na-'ture, from all Eternity. This Power muſt

'have

'have been eternal; and eternally *active*. SERM.
'That is, from all eternity his Power hath IX.
'been employed in producing different
'ſyſtems of Worlds, and different ſpecies of
'Creatures, to the honour of his Wiſdom
'and Goodneſs; and to eternity will be thus
'employed.' — How do all the powers of imagination ſink under the weight of this ſentiment! How are we loſt in the immenſity of the Creator's Works! in which this whole Earth appears but as a ſingle Atom, floating in a ray of light emitted from Himſelf.

How great and marvellous are thy Works, O LORD GOD Almighty! who ſhould not fear thee, and magnify thy great name? all thy works of wonder praiſe thee; and declare that thou art great and greatly to be feared. But

3. To beget in us a holy reverence of GOD, let us often repreſent him to ourſelves as the Omnipreſent GOD. If we would have *the fear of GOD before our Eyes*, we muſt have GOD himſelf ſo. That is, before the Eye of our mind. For he is always, and in all places, as really and as certainly preſent with us, as if he were always and in all

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places viſible to us. And not only moſt certainly, but moſt intimately preſent: not only with, but *in* us. And not only acquainted with our moſt ſecret thoughts, and viewing all that paſſes in the inmoſt rooms of our Hearts, but often exciting pious reflections and holy motions there, when we little attend to the divine agency that gave the firſt riſe to thoſe ſerious Diſpoſitions.

The Divine Omnipreſence, and the univerſal Agency of GOD's grace and providence, are no leſs adapted to inſpire our Souls with a reverential Fear of him, than his Omnipotence, or that Almighty Power which made, ſuſtains, and governs the univerſal Creation. But then, they muſt both be ſeriouſly conſidered and attended to: frequently recollected, and carefully impreſs'd upon the mind, 'till it feels the affecting influence of thoſe Thoughts; and that impreſſion retained, 'till it produce and improve a correſpondent ſerious diſpoſition towards GOD.

And thus to contemplate GOD's eſſential and univerſal Preſence, is the beſt way to procure the happineſs of his *gracious* and *ſpecial*

ſpecial Preſence. — Pious minds know what I mean by that expreſſion. SERM. IX.

If we deſire to have the *fear of GOD* prevailing in our Hearts, as an habitual and abiding Principle, we ſhould often recall them to this pious employment. And when we are apt to forget GOD, and grow vain in our imaginations, let us recollect ourſelves with *Jacob*, and ſay, *behold GOD is in this place; and I knew it not (a).* The Parent's eye, though it lays no ſervile conſtraint on a dutiful Child, yet is a conſtant guard to reſtrain him from every thing that is diſpleaſing to his parent, however pleaſing it may be to himſelf. The ſame effect will a fixt perſwaſion of GOD's preſence have upon us.

Having thus conſidered a few of thoſe things that are moſt proper to produce this divine Virtue in our Hearts (through the grace and operations of the holy Spirit for which we ſhould be daily and moſt earneſtly ſolicitous.) It is time now

III. To conſider the happy influence of it; or the good effects it will produce, when

(*a*) Gen. xxviii. 16.

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it exerts itſelf in a proper manner; or is in lively act and exerciſe. That, as by attending to what hath been ſaid under the former head, we may know how to attain it, ſo by conſidering what will be delivered under this, we may be able to judge whether we have it or no. And

1. The firſt and moſt genuine effect of the Fear of GOD, when it becomes a fixt principle in the heart, is an effectual guard againſt all known ſin. *Job by fearing GOD eſchewed evil* (*b*), that is, declin'd and avoided every ſinful practice. *By the fear of the LORD* (ſays *Solomon*) *men depart from evil* (*c*). *A wiſe man fears, and departs from evil.* And what influence this principle had upon the heart and conduct of good *Nehemiah* in this reſpect, that is to deter him from ſin, you may ſee *Nehem.* v. 15. where, after he had recited, many corruptions and abuſes which the Governors of the People had been guilty of, added, *ſo did not I, becauſe of the fear of GOD.*

And indeed nothing can well be conceived, to have a greater force or power to curb

(*b*) Job i. 1. (*c*) Prov. xvi. 6.

curb a licentious inclination, than what I have juſt mention'd as one principal ſource from whence this holy fear ariſes, *viz.* the remembrance that we are under the immediate eye of the Almighty and moſt Holy GOD, *who hateth all workers of iniquity*. Under the impreſſion of which thought, the pious Soul repels a bold Temptation with *Joſeph*'s words, *how can I do this evil, and ſin againſt GOD?* SERM. IX.

2. This Fear of GOD in the heart, is a motive no leſs proper and powerful to excite us to a chearful and ready obedience. A ſervile fear indeed is not ſo. *That* produceth not a willing, but a forced obedience. The proper principle of a chearful obedience is Love; which always prompts us to do whatever is pleaſing to its object. And this filial Reverence I am ſpeaking of, is Fear temper'd with Love: and therefore is equally proper to reſtrain us from Sin, and induce us to Duty. Thus the obedience of *Abraham*, in offering up his Son at the command of GOD, proceeded not only from his Faith, but his Fear of GOD. *Now* (ſays GOD) *I know that thou feareſt me, ſeeing thou haſt not*

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withheld thy Son, thine only Son from me (d). So it is ſaid of *Noah*, that *he being warned of GOD, of things not ſeen as yet, moved with fear, he prepared an Ark to the ſaving of his houſe (e).* It was not ſo much the fear of the Deluge as the fear of GOD, that produced in him this ready obedience.

But let one thing here be remark'd by the way, *viz.* that *that* fear of GOD which ariſes from the conſideration of his infinite Majeſty and Juſtice, or from a dread of puniſhment, if it lays an effectual reſtraint upon the mind to keep it from ſin, is not that *ſlaviſh fear* which the Apoſtle *John* ſays is inconſiſtent with *love*. Though it be a leſs liberal principle than that filial Reverence I am treating of, yet it is a motive of no ſmall uſe at ſometimes; and more apt to operate upon ſome minds than others; eſpecially when thrown into the ſcale againſt a fear of men, and the puniſhment they threaten us with for our firm adherence to the ways of GOD and Duty. And in this caſe, and with this view, it is eſpecially recommended by our Saviour himſelf, *Luke* xii. 4, 5. *And I ſay unto you, my Friends, be not afraid of them that*

(*d*) Gen. xxii. 12. (*e*) Heb. xi. 7.

that kill the Body, and after that have no more that they can do: but I will forewarn you whom you ſhall fear; fear him, who, after he hath killed, hath power to caſt into hell: yea, I ſay unto you, fear him.

3. This Fear of GOD will be a great motive and help to Self-government. I mean here principally the government of the mind; and of all that paſſes within us: our thoughts, deſires and paſſions; which, as they are as well known to GOD as our outward actions are to men, every one whoſe *heart is right with GOD* will take care to keep under ſtrict diſcipline and government.

It is the characteriſtick of a Hypocrite, that his only care is to keep well with men, by external forms of Godlineſs; without any regard to his heart or the motions and diſpoſitions of the inner man, which lie conceal'd from the eye of the world. On the contrary, it is a ſure mark of ſincerity to be as careful of our inward thoughts and affections, as of our outward conduct and actions; from this conſideration, 'that GOD 'knows our hearts.' Becauſe this is an argument that we are univerſally and uniformly

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formly govern'd by the genuine Fear of GOD: which equally excites us to do every thing that pleaſes, and to avoid every thing that offends him. And we know that the ſins of the heart are no leſs offenſive to him, than thoſe of the life.

This reverend ſenſe of GOD, his power and preſence, deeply impreſſed on the heart, will have a very happy effect upon us in all our religious Duties: and be a good means to bring the mind into that ſerious and pious frame, which will beſt diſpoſe us to wait upon GOD and offer him *an acceptable Service*. This is what we often find we want. When we come to worſhip GOD, our minds are ſometimes ſo cold and carnal, ſo vain and worldly, and our thoughts ſo unfixed, deſultory, and vagrant, that we can hardly get our hearts ſuitably engaged 'till the ſervice is near at an end: and thus we loſe almoſt all the pleaſure and benefit we expected from it. But when we come with our minds deeply tinctured with theſe pious Affections, and ſtrongly impreſs'd with the juſteſt Sentiments of the perfections of GOD; and eſpecially of his Almighty power and immediate preſence; the heart then ſoon be-

becomes ſerious, ſoft and pliant: and beſt diſpoſed to receive the moſt gracious communications. SERM. IX.

And this Fear is a no leſs happy means to keep the mind ſuitably engaged in Duty, than to bring it into a fit frame for it: and to prevent that wandering of the heart in the Service of GOD which ſo often interrupts and ſpoils our Devotions.

5. This reverential fear of GOD will raiſe us above a ſervile fear of men. If *GOD be for us, we need not fear what man can do againſt us.* It will alſo free the mind from anxious ſolicitude under the apprehenſions of future evil. For this filial fear of GOD is always attended with a confidence in his paternal care. Therefore ſays the *Pſalmiſt*, *O fear the Lord ye his Saints, for there is no want to them that fear him. The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them (a). Like as the Father pitieth his children, ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him: he conſidereth their frame, and remembereth that they are duſt (b) For the Lord*

(a) Pſal. xxxiv. 7, 9. (b) Pſal. ciii. 13.

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Lord taketh pleaſure in them that fear him. (*c*) and the wiſe man ſays, *in the fear of the Lord is ſtrong confidence* (*d*).

I ſhall only obſerve

Laſtly, That this pious temper is that which immediately fits us for Heaven. For as it is eſſential to Love, and comprehended in it; it is the very temper of the bleſſed World. In which, as well as in the Knowledge and Love of GOD, (if we are ſo happy as to arrive there) we ſhall be eternally improving.

I ſhall now conclude all with two or three Reflections upon this ſubject. And

1. From the happy effects and extenſive influence of this Grace, we ſee how properly it is put for the whole of Religion. This indeed is obſervable of all the graces of Piety: becauſe they are in the nature of things ſo link'd and connected together, that where there is one of them in ſincerity, there are all the reſt in reality: though in moſt religious Characters, one of them is obſerv'd to ſhine brighter than the reſt. Thus all Religion is ſometimes comprehend-

(*c*) Pſal. cxlviii. 2. (*d*) Prov. xiv. 26.

hended under the Knowledge of GOD; ſometimes in the Love of GOD; but never more frequently than under this phraſe *the Fear of the Lord:* which uſually begins with an awful ſenſe of GOD, and terminates in a ſupreme delight and truſt in him. And therefore is not only the *beginning*, but the *perfection* of Wiſdom. SERM. IX.

2. By theſe characteriſtick marks and effects of this holy Fear let us examine ourſelves, and ſee whether we have, and what progreſs we have made in this divine Virtue. Does it reſtrain us from ſin? from all, even our moſt beloved Sin? — Does it inſtigate and excite us to Duty? to all, even the moſt difficult, and to a carnal mind the moſt diſagreeable Duties? and conquer all reluctance to them? — Does it make us watchful over our thoughts, deſires, and paſſions? becauſe we know that all that paſſeth in our Hearts is known to GOD. — Does it make our minds ſerious, compoſed, and reverend, in all our religious approaches to GOD? and keep them devoutly engaged in holy Duties? — Does it produce in us ſuch a placid and fiducial Truſt in GOD at all times, as lifts us above an anxious fear

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fear of any thing that can befal us under the government of his all-ruling Providence?—Then may we be aſſured that the *fear of GOD is before our Eyes*; and is a fixt, habitual, permanent principle in the heart: that we are ſafe under his care and protection here, and ſhall be happy in his love and preſence for ever. And *how great is his mercy to them who thus fear him!* how unſpeakable that Happineſs which he hath laid up for them who thus *put their truſt in Him before the Children of men!*

The HYMN.

I.

Celeſtial King, our ſpirits lie
  Trembling 'beneath thy feet;
And wiſh, and caſt a longing eye,
  To reach thy lofty ſeat.

II.

In thee what endleſs wonders meet!
  What various glory ſhines!
The croſſing rays too fiercely beat
  Upon our fainting minds.

III.

III.

Deſtruction waits upon thy frown,
And heaven attends thy ſmile:
A wreath of Light'ning arms thy crown,
But love adorns it ſtill.

IV.

Angels are loſt in ſweet ſurpriſe,
If thou unvail thy grace;
And humble Awe runs through the ſkies,
When wrath arrays thy face.

V.

Created powers, how weak they be!
How ſhort our praiſes fall!
So much a-kin to nothing we,
And thou th' eternal all.

VI.

Lord here we bend our humble ſouls,
And awfully adore!
For the weak pinions of our minds
Can ſtretch a thought no more.

SERMON X.

Of Truſt in GOD.

PROV. iii. 5.

Truſt in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own underſtanding.

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OF all the Divine virtues, or thoſe pious diſpoſitions towards GOD which his Word requires us to preſerve and cultivate, there is none of a more happy and extenſive influence than that which I am this day to recommend to your attention and practice; *viz.* a ſerene and ſovereign Truſt in and Dependance upon GOD, his providential care and paternal goodneſs, under all the poſſible variations of our inward temper and outward circumſtances.

What-

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Whatever we purſue or ſhun, or hope or fear; whatever be our condition, afflictive or proſperous, we ſhould always remember that every thing depends on the Will of God, and is at the diſpoſal of his all-preſiding Providence. And this Thought ſhould be ſo conſtantly and familiarly preſent with us, and ſo effectually wrought into our minds, as to produce an habitual, calm reliance upon him in every condition, and a chearful hope in him at all times.

To *know* God is the firſt principle of piety; to *love* him, the ſecond; to *fear* him, the third. From all which reſults this filial and fiducial *Truſt* in him, as our almighty father and ever preſent friend; which ſets the mind free from all anxious fears, and fills it with perfect compoſure and peace under all the varying ſcenes of human life.

In treating of this part of the Chriſtian temper, I ſhall endeavour

I. To ſhew you more particularly what are the proper ſources from whence it ſprings.

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II. In what ſituation of affairs and circumſtances of life the ſteady exerciſe of this grace is more eſpecially requiſite and important. And then

III. Repreſent to you the Happineſs that reſults from the governing influence of it.

I. Let us conſider what are the ſources from whence this ſovereign Truſt in GOD doth principally flow. And

1. It is eaſy to perceive that this ſupreme and complacential Truſt in GOD, chiefly ariſes from a firm and lively *faith* in him; his eternal Attributes, all-governing Providence, and Omnipreſence.

This firm Hope and Truſt in GOD, I ſay, ſprings from a lively faith in his eternal *Attributes*; particularly his almighty Power, his infinite Goodneſs, and unerring Wiſdom: that his Power is omnipotent, and therefore that he is able to *ſave to the utmoſt*; that is, in the utmoſt Diſtreſs, and to the utmoſt extent of our Deſire; that his Goodneſs is unbounded, and therefore that he is no leſs willing than he is able to ſave us; and that his

his Wiſdom is infallible, and therefore he beſt knows by what means, in what manner, and at what time, to hand forth the deſir'd ſalvation to us. SERM. X.

But 'tis not enough barely to believe, or give our ready aſſent to the truth of all this (for if we believe there is a GOD, an eternal, original, and all-wiſe Cauſe, this enters into the very nature of that Belief) but we muſt dwell upon the ſentiment, render it familiar to our minds, and get it wrought as a fixt principle into the heart, ſo as to feel the power and efficacy of it (which is the definition of a living faith) 'ere it can beget in us that firm, filial, fiducial Truſt in and Dependance upon GOD which the text requires.

So that a ſerious and believing contemplation of the Divine perfections, is a mighty Help to a ſteady and holy confidence in GOD. Therefore ſaith the *Pſalmiſt*, *they that know thy name will put their truſt in thee: for thou LORD haſt not forſaken them that ſeek thee (a).*

This Truſt in GOD flows alſo from a firm faith in his univerſal and particular *Providence.*

(*a*) Pſal. ix. 10.

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dence. That is, from a full perſwaſion and aſſurance, that the providence of GOD not only preſides over all the affairs of the world in general, but ſuperintends all our private concerns in particular: that whatever befalls us is order'd by him, and comes not only by his permiſſion, but by his immediate Direction and Appointment, to anſwer ſome good and wiſe end. And this Providence, we are by the beſt authority aſſured, extends to the minuteſt Events of life. Now, I ſay, a conſtant, habitual, and impreſſive ſenſe of ſuch a providence, converſant in and over-ruling all our affairs, temporal and ſpiritual, even thoſe that are moſt particular and intereſting, is a powerful means to excite a ſteady Truſt in GOD at all times. And this is what is comprehended in that precept, *in all thy ways acknowledge him* (*b*): i. e. obſerve and acknowledge his Providence, and then quietly confide in and depend upon it. Again,

A conſtant ſenſe of GOD's *Omnipreſence* is another thing that conduces much to a firm and peaceful Truſt in him: or a full aſſurance that not only his providence over-rules all things,

(*b*) Prov. iii. 6.

things, but that his preſence fills all places; or that he is as certainly preſent with us at all times as if we ſaw him with our bodily eyes.

A ſteady Truſt in GOD then, I ſay, naturally flows from a lively Faith in him, his eternal Attributes, his all-ruling Providence, and univerſal Preſence.

2. Another thing that greatly encourages and confirms a peaceful Truſt in GOD is, the frequent experience we have had of his ſeaſonable help and deliverance in former times of diſtreſs and danger. This is a conſideration, you know, which the Pſalmiſt *David* often recall'd for the ſupport of his faith and hope in his greateſt tribulations. *Thou haſt been my Help; leave me not, neither forſake me, O GOD of my Salvation (c). Remember, O LORD, thy loving kindneſs and thy tender mercies; for they have been ever of old (d).* Such a recollection is a great encouragement to our humble confidence in GOD, becauſe we have now our own experience to aſſure us that GOD can ſave us; and therefore if we wait upon him with faith, patience and prayer, he will again extend the ſame ſalvation to us: according

(c) Pſal. xxvii. 9. (d) Pſal. xxv. 6.

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cording to the Apoſtle's concluſion in the like caſe, the GOD *that hath deliver'd and doth deliver, in him I truſt that he will yet deliver me (e).* But then

3. There is one thing farther neceſſary, and that is, that we continue faithful to GOD and his cauſe; that we keep in the way of our Duty, and uſe all the proper means in our power to help our ſelves. For to pretend to rely upon the protection and help of almighty GOD when we are acting againſt him, or are engaged in a bad cauſe, is moſt daring preſumption; and to depend upon him to help us, when we refuſe to do what we can to help our ſelves, or to make uſe of thoſe means which he hath given us for that purpoſe, is not to truſt him, but to tempt him: and betrays either groſs Ignorance or great Hypocriſy.

When we are commanded in the text to *truſt in the LORD with all our might*, we are not forbid to *uſe* our own underſtanding; but not *to lean* to it: that is, not to truſt to it, or depend upon it; or place that confidence in our own wiſdom and prudence,

(e) 2 Cor. i. 10.

dence, which we ought to place only in the Divine providence. SERM. X.

But when we are engaged in a good cauſe, are in the way of our duty, and diligently uſe the beſt means and the moſt prudent meaſures to effect any right end, and humbly ſeek to GOD for direction, we may then warrantably hope for and depend upon it. And the very conſciouſneſs of this will greatly excite and ſupport that Dependance. In this way we may ſafely truſt him *with all our hearts:* that is, in full confidence that under the Conduct of his Providence, all things ſhall iſſue well; whatever be the preſent appearance; and, with the *Pſalmiſt*'s pious exultation, may ſay, *the LORD is my rock and my fortreſs, and my deliverer; my GOD, my ſtrength, in whom I will truſt; my buckler, and the horn of my ſalvation, and my high tower. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praiſed: ſo ſhall I be ſaved from mine enemies. The LORD is my light and my ſalvation, whom ſhall I fear? the LORD is the ſtrength of my life, of whom ſhall I be afraid (f)?*

(f) Pſalm xviii. 2, 3.

II. Let us now conſider in what ſituation of affairs and circumſtances of Life the vigorous efforts of this virtue will be more eſpecially needful and important.

We are indeed to *truſt in the* LORD *at all times*; becauſe we have always a conſtant and neceſſary Dependance upon him: but at ſome ſeaſons we are more eſpecially call'd by providence to the exerciſe of this Grace than at others. Particularly

1. In a time of Proſperity. Becauſe we are then moſt apt to forget GOD.

It is a weakneſs in our nature, than which none is more apparent or more deplorable, that we know not how to bear proſperity: that when we receive the greateſt Bleſſings from GOD, we are leaſt ſenſible of our Dependance upon him: and that the Bounties of his hand, which were deſign'd to engage our hearts to him, have commonly a quite contrary effect, and withdraw our regards from him. We are, without doubt, equally dependant on the great Author of our Being at all times. How is it then that we are ſo much more ſenſible of this in adverſity, than

we

we are in proſperity? This can be reſolved into nothing elſe but the native weakneſs of our minds, the dangerous impreſſions which an affluence of earthly comforts makes upon them, and the numerous ſnares and temptations into which it betrays us: to which if men did but ſeriouſly attend, they would not ſo deeply regret the want, or ſo paſſionately deſire a redundance, of thoſe outward bleſſings as they commonly do.

Even *David* himſelf, than whom no man was ever more diſtinguiſh'd for a ſpirit of exalted piety, was not free from this frailty: but was apt to grow ſecure and vain in a day of uninterrupted peace. When his *mountain ſtood ſtrong* he fondly imagin'd that *he ſhould never be moved* (*g*). And therefore to bring him to a better diſpoſition, that pleaſing ſcene was often revers'd.—It is juſt the ſame with us: if we know any thing of our ſelves, we know it, we feel it; and in our beſt frames are griev'd and humbled for it. But how unreaſonable, how ungrateful is this! are we not as much dependant on God for the continuance of our Bleſſings, as we are for the removal of our Afflictions? Can

(*g*) Pſalm xxx. 6, 7.

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Cannot the ſame hand that beſtow'd theſe mercies upon us, as eaſily take them from us? and by thus forgetting our dependance on GOD for the continuance of them, do we not provoke him ſo to do? Every new mercy we receive then, and eſpecially every extraordinary mercy, ſhould excite in us a more lively ſenſe of our dependance upon GOD, and quicken our chearful Truſt in him.

2. Another ſeaſon when the exerciſe of this grace will be of peculiar advantage to us, is a time of Adverſity and Diſtreſs. Under which we may poſſibly, at ſome times, have no other refuge left. But this is a ſure reſource that never fails For *the ſalvation of the righteous is of the* LORD, *he is their ſtrength in a time of trouble* (*b*). But to be more particular.

In a day of Danger; when we apprehend and dread ſome ſore evil approaching, we are then more eſpecially call'd to put our truſt in the LORD. Let us here take the pious Pſalmiſt for our pattern. *I have heard the ſlanders of many, fear was on every ſide; whilſt they took counſel together againſt me; they*

(*b*) Pſalm xxxvii. 39.

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they deviſed to take away my Life. But I truſted in thee, O LORD, *I ſaid thou art my* GOD. *My times are in thine hands, deliver me from the hand of the enemy, and from them that perſecute me* (*i*).

Is it a publick calamity we fear, from the Invaſion or Perſecution of a powerful, proud, perfidious enemy? Nothing becomes us better than the calmneſs, piety and compoſure of *David*'s ſpirit; *O my GOD, I truſt in thee, let me not be aſhamed; let not mine enemies triumph over me. Yea, let none that truſt in thee be aſhamed: let them be aſhamed who deal perverſely without a cauſe* (*k*). *The LORD is the ſtrength of my life, of whom ſhould I be afraid? though an Hoſt ſhould encamp againſt me, my heart ſhall not fear: though war ſhould riſe againſt me, in this will I be confident. I will not be afraid of ten thouſands of people that have ſet themſelves againſt me round about* (*l*).

If it be a private trouble, ſome perſonal or domeſtick affliction that we fear, our refuge is the ſame: and therefore the language of our heart ſhould be ſtill the ſame: *O my*

(*i*) Pſalm xxxi. 13—15. (*k*) Pſalm xxv. 1, 2.
(*l*) Pſalm iii. 6.

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O my GOD, I truſt in thee. This filial hope and truſt in GOD will greatly eaſe and diſburden the mind, compoſe and calm the ſpirit, and bring us into the beſt frame to meet the coming evil whatever it be. *Thou wilt keep him* (ſaith the prophet) *in perfect peace, whoſe mind is ſtayed on the* LORD. *Therefore* (he adds) *truſt ye in the* LORD *for ever; for in the* LORD *Jehovah is everlaſting ſtrength* (*m*). But

The lively exerciſe of this Grace will be of no leſs comfort and ſervice to us in a day of deep diſtreſs: when *the Evil we fear'd ſhall come upon us*, as it did upon *Job*. Like him then let us retain our Integrity: and Hope in GOD; ſaying, *though he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him: he alſo ſhall be my ſalvation* (*n*).

This peaceful, ſtedfaſt, undiſmay'd truſt in GOD in a time of ſore affliction, it muſt be own'd, is no ordinary acquiſition: and argues an improved ſtate of Grace, and advanc'd degree of piety. But what ſhould powerfully induce us to labour after it, are theſe three mighty advantages that accrue from

(*m*) Iſaiah xxvi. 4, 5. (*n*) Job xiii. 15, 16.

from it: which I ſhall juſt mention, but muſt not ſtay to dilate upon.

1. It ſoftens every ſorrow, and lightens every Load. It takes off more than half the weight of every affliction, and helps us to bear the remainder better.

2. It is the beſt way to haſten Deliverance. For the ſooner the end of any afflicting Diſpenſation be anſwer'd, the ſooner will it be removed: and this ſtedfaſt Hope and Truſt in GOD is a ſure ſign that afflictions are ſanctified, or the Deſign of them accompliſhed.

3. This is the beſt way to receive the moſt laſting Benefit by afflictions: to extract Honey from the Sting; and turn the wormwood and gall into the moſt reviving Cordials; and the ſoreſt Evils into the greateſt Good.—But to proceed.

The exerciſe of this Grace will be of great uſe and benefit, when the providence of GOD calls us to any extraordinary Service, wherein we may apprehend either difficulty or danger. Theſe apprehenſions, inſtead of tempting us to decline it (as they are too apt to do) ſhould only quicken our truſt in GOD, for that wiſdom, fortitude and faith, that

are

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are requiſite to a right and regular performance of it. A diffidence in our own ſtrength ſhould excite our humble confidence in GOD: and when this is attended with prayer, and a diligent uſe of all proper means, we ſhall always find *his grace ſufficient for us.*

4. There is another ſituation which many chriſtians are in, that calls for the conſtant exerciſe of this habitual dependance and fiducial Truſt in GOD; and that is, a ſtate of extreme penury. But as GOD has been pleaſed in a ſpecial manner to declare himſelf the Patron and Protector of the poor and helpleſs, ſo for the encouragement of their faith and hope, his word abounds in promiſes peculiarly adapted to their relief and comfort; as the motives and ſupports of that intire Truſt in him to which they are ſo immediately call'd. *Truſt in the LORD and do good, ſo ſhalt thou dwell in the land; and verily thou ſhalt be fed (o). O, taſte and ſee that the LORD is good; bleſſed is the man that truſteth in him. O, fear the LORD ye his ſaints, for there is no want to them that fear him.* That is, he will take care to ſupply all their neceſſary wants: and

(o) Pſalm xxxvii. 3.

and in lieu of thoſe conveniences which they think they want, he will beſtow upon them ſomething much better. *The young lions do lack, and ſuffer hunger; but they that fear the LORD ſhall not want any good thing (p).*

Laſtly. That ſeaſon wherein this ſtedfaſt Truſt in GOD will be put to its ſevereſt proof, and when we ſhall ſtand in need of all its influence to fortify and compoſe the mind, is a time of Death: or when we are brought to a near proſpect of it, and ſtand on the very brink of Eternity. Becauſe then our All is at ſtake: and that for ever. And none can enjoy this ſweet ſupport of a calm and undiſturbed Truſt in GOD at Death, who have not accuſtom'd themſelves to exerciſe this filial and fiducial dependance upon him all their Lives. And without a well grounded faith and hope and truſt in GOD in that hour, the ſoul, if ſenſible, muſt neceſſarily be cover'd with Diſmay and Horror.

But the faithful Chriſtian, who hath *walked with GOD* in a firm habitual dependance upon him all his days, can truſt him in Death. And committing his ſoul to GOD, as

(p) Pſalm xxxiv. 8—10.

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as *into the hands of a faithful Creator*, he cloſes his eyes in peace, and ſleeps in *Jeſus*; with unwavering hope that he ſhall riſe *in the reſurrection of the juſt*; and *be ſatisfied when he awakes in his likeneſs*.

Such now is the extent and ſuch the importance of the chriſtian's Hope: and theſe the ſeaſons when it ſheds the ſweeteſt influence on the ſoul. And now—which was the laſt thing I propos'd,

III. Let us briefly reflect on the Happineſs of thoſe who live under the governing influence of this Divine virtue.

They are of all men the moſt happy in this world. And this holy temper, which makes them ſo, is at the ſame time a ſure pledge and ſecurity to them, of a much greater happineſs in the future. *Happy is he that hath the GOD of Jacob for his Help; whoſe Hope is in the LORD his GOD* (q). *Bleſſed are all they that put their truſt in him. O, how great is thy Goodneſs* (ſaith the *Pſalmiſt*) *which thou haſt laid up for them that fear*

(q) Pſalm cxlvi. 5.

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fear thee! which thou haſt wrought for them that truſt in thee, before the ſons of men (*r*)!

1. They are happy in this world: as far as Happineſs is compatible with Mortality. Becauſe they poſſeſs peace and ſelf-enjoyment in thoſe circumſtances in which others think themſelves moſt miſerable. *At what time I am afraid* (ſays the *Pſalmiſt*) *I will truſt in thee* (*s*). This was his never-failing Refuge, and impregnable Fortreſs: in which he rejoiced and triumph'd; and called upon others to do the ſame. *Bleſſed is the man that maketh the* LORD *his Truſt. Let all thoſe that put their truſt in him rejoice: let them ever ſhout for Joy becauſe thou defendeſt them* (*t*).

Their peace of mind is ſo well eſtabliſh'd that it is not in the power of any earthly Incidents to diſturb, much leſs to deſtroy it. For *they that truſt in the* LORD *ſhall be as mount Zion, which cannot be moved* (*u*).

This unſhaken tranquility of mind ariſing from an habitual confidence in GOD, is not only a Defence to them againſt all the evils of the world, but gives them the beſt reliſh

(*r*) Pſalm xxxi. 19. (*s*) Pſalm lvi. 3, 4. (*t*) Pſalm xl. 5, 11. (*u*) Pſalm cxxv. 1.

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and trueſt enjoyment of its comforts, in whatever proportion they have them; and conſequently renders them the happieſt perſons in it.

2. They are happy when they are going out of the world. For that filial truſt in, and fiducial dependance upon GOD, which they have accuſtom'd themſelves to all their life, will not fail them at death. When every earthly Prop ſinks under them, this ſtill ſuſtains them: *I know that my Redeemer liveth. I know in whom I have believed; and am ſure that he is able to keep that which I commit unto him againſt that day.* But

(*Laſtly*) Their Happineſs in the other world will be unſpeakable and eternal. For which they will, with never-ceaſing gratitude and joy, be for ever acknowledging their dependance on GOD. Where their Faith and Hope ſhall ceaſe; but their Truſt in GOD never will: tho' it ſhall be greatly exalted and much alter'd from what it now is. They ſhall no longer truſt him in the dark, or pray to him with tears, or rely upon him for delivering mercy; for all ſhall be light about them, every tear ſhall be wip'd away from the eye, and there ſhall be no

no more pain. But raptur'd with the beatific viſion, and the joys that flow inceſſant from the Throne of GOD, they ſhall in a ſublimer ſenſe adopt the words of the Jewiſh church; *Lo, this is our GOD, we have waited for him, and he hath ſaved us: this is the LORD, we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his ſalvation* (*w*). SERM. X.

And now what ſhall we ſay to theſe things? Happy, thrice happy, are they who are in ſuch a caſe; whoſe ſtedfaſt Hope is fixt on the Lord their GOD! — And ſhall we not put in now for a ſhare in this vaſt Fund of Happineſs? It ariſes chiefly, we ſee, from Faith and the teſtimony of a good Conſcience: that is, a conſciouſneſs of our Integrity, and that we are in the way of our Duty; and whilſt we continue ſo, all the Attributes of GOD are engaged for our protection, help, and ſafety.

Let me only add, that as this, and every other Grace is the gift of GOD, ſo it is not only obtain'd by Prayer, but is greatly ſtrengthened and improv'd by an ardent exerciſe of it in that religious Duty; and is the beſt means to ſecure the Bleſſing we pray for.

(*w*) Iſaiah xxv. 9.

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As an inſtance of this, let us take the Prayer which *David* put up to GOD in the xxvth Pſalm. And as no man was more frequently call'd to this pious Truſt in GOD, ſo no man was ever more eminent for it. So much is it ſtrengthen'd by conſtant exerciſe. With this, you ſee, he begins his prayer, ver. 2. *O my GOD I truſt in thee; let me not be aſhamed:* and with this he concludes it, ver. 20. *O, keep my ſoul and deliver me: let me not be aſhamed, for I put my truſt in thee. Let Integrity and Uprightneſs preſerve me, for I wait on thee.*

And from the happy effects of this pious exerciſe of the mind, which he had ſo long experienc'd, he earneſtly exhorts all to the ſame. Which exhortation I ſhall leave with you in his own words, and ſo conclude: *O Iſrael, truſt thou in the LORD, he is their help and their ſhield. O houſe of Aaron truſt in the LORD, he is their help and their ſhield. Ye that fear the LORD, truſt in the LORD, he is their help and their ſhield. Therefore, wait on the LORD, be of good courage, and he ſhall ſtrengthen your heart. Wait, I ſay, on the LORD* (*x*).

The

(*x*) Pſalm cxv. 9, 10, 11.

The HYMN.

I.

Great ſource of boundleſs power and grace
Attend my mournful cry;
In the dark hour of deep diſtreſs,
To thee, to thee I fly.

II.

Thou art my ſtrength, my life, my ſtay,
Aſſiſt my feeble truſt;
Drive theſe diſtreſſing fears away,
And raiſe me from the duſt.

III.

O, let me call thy grace to mind,
And truſt thy glorious name:
Jehovah, powerful, wiſe and kind,
For ever is the ſame.

IV.

Thy preſence, LORD, can cheer my heart,
When earthly comforts die;
Thy ſmile can bid my pains depart
And raiſe my pleaſures high.

V.

Here let me reſt, on thee depend,
My GOD, my Hope, my All;
Be thou my everlaſting friend,
And I can never fall.

SER-

SERMON XI.

Of living to the Will of GOD.

1 PETER iv. 2.

That he ſhould no longer live the reſt of his time in the fleſh to the luſts of men, but to the will of GOD.

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LET us read the whole period.—*Foraſmuch then as Chriſt hath ſuffer'd for us in the fleſh, arm yourſelves likewiſe with the ſame mind; for he that hath ſuffer'd in the fleſh hath ceaſed from ſin; that he ſhould no longer live the reſt of his time in the fleſh to the luſts of men, but to the will of GOD.*

The next great branch of Piety that falls under our conſideration is an *abſolute compliance with the whole will of GOD*; reſulting from his relation to us as our Creator:

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which includes in it ſomething much more than the united authority of a King and Father.

But before I enter upon this ſubject, it will be proper to remove a difficulty that appears in the words I have choſen for the foundation of it.

Towards the cloſe of the foregoing chapter, (*ver.* 18.) the Apoſtle had been ſpeaking of the ſufferings of Chriſt, who was *put to death in the fleſh.* The practical inference he draws from thence, is in the firſt verſe of this chapter; *foraſmuch then as Chriſt hath ſuffer'd for us in the fleſh, arm yourſelves likewiſe with the ſame mind; for he that hath ſuffer'd in the fleſh hath ceaſed from ſin.*—Theſe words are obſcure. But all the obſcurity (I apprehend) ariſes from an inattention to the Idiom or peculiarity of the original language: wherein elliptical forms of ſpeech are very common. Of which we have an inſtance in the words before us; where there is certainly ſomething wanting to compleat the ſenſe; which when reſtor'd, the ſenſe is plain. Let us ſee then if we cannot reſtore it. *Foraſmuch then as Chriſt hath ſuffer'd for us in the fleſh, arm yourſelves likewiſe*

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wiſe with the ſame mind; that is, to ſuffer in the fleſh too: *for he that hath ſuffer'd in the fleſh*, by mortifying the luſts of it (this ſeems to be the proper ſupplement of the ellipſis) *hath ceaſed from ſin.*—But how? totally and abſolutely? No—only from the prevailing habit, and allowed courſe of it, so AS (*a*) *no longer to live the reſt of his time in the fleſh to the luſts of men, but to the will of* GOD. With this ſmall ſupplement, and alteration of the verſion (which the original not only admits but requires) the Apoſtle's meaning ſtands in a full and beautiful light. And that this was his true meaning appears from the words immediately following, ver. 3. *for the time paſt of our Life may ſuffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in laſciviouſneſs, luſts, exceſs of wine,*

(*a*) So the greek particles (εις το) often ſignify: not (*to the end that*) but (*ſo that*): not denoting the *intention*, but the *effect*. In which ſenſe it is uſed *Heb.* xi. 3. *Thro' faith we underſtand that the worlds were framed by the word of* GOD, so THAT (εις το) *things that are ſeen were not made of things that do appear.* And again, 2 *Cor.* iv. 4. *In whom the* GOD *of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, leſt the light* (we render it, but it ſhould be render'd) SO THAT *the light* (εις το μη) *of the glorious Goſpel of Chriſt doth not ſhine unto them.*

wine, revellings, banquettings and abominable idolatries.

But to come now more immediately to the ſubject.

In the words we have two very different ends or rules of life, by one or other of which all men direct their conduct: *viz. the Luſts of men, and the Will of GOD.* By the *former* we are to underſtand thoſe carnal luſts or worldly pleaſures, by which the greateſt part of mankind are captivated and govern'd: called by the Apoſtle *John, the luſts of the fleſh, the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life* (*b*). And by the *latter* we are to underſtand the manifeſt Command of our Maker.—Now as theſe two principles are oppoſite, they form the different characters of men; and from the prevalence of the one or the other, a man is ſaid to be *carnally* or *ſpiritually minded.* The one lives to himſelf, or the *luſts of men*; the other lives to GOD, or to the *will of GOD.* For to live to GOD, and to live to the *will of GOD*, is the ſame thing: and ſignifies no more than this, that we make it our great Aim

(*b*) 1 John xi. 16.

Aim and Buſineſs in life to ſerve and pleaſe him. Which is a branch of Piety that naturally reſults from thoſe I have before inſiſted upon: for he that *knows*, *fears*, *loves* and *truſts* GOD with all his heart, will make it his great deſire and care to order and conduct his whole life according to *his Will*. SERM. XI.

In treating this ſubject let us conſider

I. What this Will of GOD is.

II. How it may be known.

III. In what manner we are to live to it.

Laſtly. What ſhould principally induce us hereunto.

I. Let us conſider what this Will of GOD is.

The Will of GOD is twofold: (*viz.*) his *preceptive* or commanding, and his *providential* or diſpoſing Will. Now *to live to the Will of GOD*, is to live in a ſtedfaſt Obedience to the *former*, and a ready Subjection to

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to the *latter:* or to do whatever he requires of us, and ſubmit to whatever he lays upon us. This is to *ſtand compleat in the whole will of GOD.*

But 'tis the former of theſe that falls principally under our preſent conſideration: becauſe the latter is comprehended in it. For it is the Will, the expreſs Precept and Command of GOD, that we meekly acquieſce in all his providential diſpoſals: and therefore if we make the will of GOD at all times the meaſure of ours, we ſhall make no difficulty of *ſubmitting* to it.—But

II. How muſt we know what the Will of GOD is?

The firſt and moſt neceſſary point of Enquiry with every reaſonable creature is this: What doth my Maker expect from me? what muſt I do to pleaſe him? that I may ſhew my gratitude to him for all his bounty to me? And when ſuch an Enquiry is made with ſincerity, 'tis a ſure ſign that the heart is rightly turn'd to GOD. The firſt breathing of the new creature is, *Lord, what wilt thou*

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thou have me to do (*b*). And bleſſed be GOD, who hath furniſh'd us with ſufficient means of attaining full ſatisfaction in this important Enquiry. For

1. In the original frame and conſtitution of our minds he hath impreſs'd a ſtrong ſenſe of good and evil, right and wrong: which is innate, or born with us; is common to, and inherent in every man; and inſeparable from human nature.

This is what ſome call the *moral ſenſe*: being that by which we judge of moral Objects as clearly, as by our bodily ſenſes we do of corporeal. Tho' it be ſomethiug different from reaſon itſelf (*c*), yet 'tis improved with it; is peculiar to reaſonable Beings; and what the irrational part of the world diſcover not the leaſt trace or tincture of. And as it commonly grows up with uncorrupted reaſon, ſo it ſinks with it. Induſtry and Education brighten, ſtrengthen and exalt them both: and both are weaken'd, obſcur'd, and ſometimes almoſt totally obliterated, by ignorance, ſloth and ſenſual exceſſes.

It

(*b*) *Acts* ix. 6.

(*c*) I call it ſomething *different from reaſon itſelf*, becauſe our approbation of a very good action, or deteſtation of a very

It is by others call'd a *natural conſcience*: and by the Apoſtle *Paul*, *the law of GOD written in the heart*. By which the mind as clearly perceives an eſſential difference between right and wrong, as the Eye does between light and darkneſs; or the Ear between diſcord and harmony. By this the Apoſtle tells us, that *the Gentiles, who had not the Law, were a Law unto themſelves; did by nature* (or by the help of this natural light) *the things contained in the law: and ſhew'd the work of the law written in their hearts; their conſcience alſo bearing witneſs, and their thoughts the mean while accuſing or elſe excuſing one another (d)*.

2. Analogous to this, but diſtinct from it, we conſider human reaſon, or the natural deductions of our own minds, as another means of knowing the will of GOD: or the intellectual power within us, contemplating all the viſible Objects around us, tracing out the original Cauſe from the effects it has produced.

This

very bad one, is ſo ſudden and irreſiſtible, that the mind is not conſcious of any previous act of judgment conducing to ſuch a determination. For which cauſe, inſtead of the *moral act of reaſon*, ſome have choſe to call it the *moral ſenſe*.

(*d*) *Rom.* xi. 14, 15.

This is commonly call'd the *light of nature:* which, when diligently attended to, diſcovers much of the nature and perfections of the Divine Being; as the firſt, intelligent, good, moſt wiſe and all-powerful Cauſe of all things; as alſo our Duty to him, and dependance upon him. For the Apoſtle aſſures us, that *the inviſible things of GOD from the beginning of the world are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by thoſe things that do appear; even his eternal power and godhead* (e). So that they are *without excuſe who, when they know him to be GOD, do not glorify him as GOD.*

As that moral Inſtinct before mention'd is much improved by reaſon, ſo this natural light is much improv'd by learning, or a larger acquaintance with the works of nature.

Theſe two were all the advantages which the heathen world had, to attain the Knowledge of GOD, and his Will. But as the human underſtanding has, ſince their time, been better cultivated and improv'd, and we have carried our reſearches further into the laws of nature, we enjoy thoſe two advantages

(e) *Rom.* i. 20.

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tages of knowing the Divine will in a much greater perfection than they did.

But as there remain'd ſtill an obſcurity in the light of nature; and the paſſions and prejudices of the mind, and the corruptions of the heart, often defeated thoſe innate notices of *Deity*, and in ſome caſes, through the power of inveterate habits, well nigh extinguiſh'd thoſe natural impreſſions of good and evil; therefore, as a more effectual and ſupplemental Aid, GOD was pleas'd to ſuperadd

3. A written Revelation; to give us a more enlarg'd and diſtinct knowledge of himſelf, and a more explicit and particular diſcovery of his Will, or what he requires of us: and that confirm'd by numerous Miracles and Prophecies, and every other credential whereby a Divine Revelation can be authenticated. Which not only ratifies and enforces all the obligations of natural Religion, but exalts them, and carries them higher than the mere unenlighten'd and unaſſiſted reaſon of man ever did or could.

And not only ſo, but by opening a larger proſpect to the human mind, and diſcovering certain grand and ſublime truths which the

the light of nature could never teach us, it enforces the Duties of natural religion by ſtronger motives and more ſtriking conſiderations than were ever known before. So that the meaneſt Chriſtian is now no longer at a loſs to know what the will of GOD is; and has no more to do than to open his Bible, and he is immediately and expreſsly told by GOD himſelf, how he is *to walk ſo as to pleaſe him.* I might add

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4. The Providence of GOD ſometimes gives us a plain indication of his Will. I mean, in ſome particular inſtances wherein the former rules are not ſo fitly applicable for our direction. For inſtance, ſuppoſe two different methods of conduct are propos'd to our choice, and we know not well which to prefer, but foreſee important conſequences to depend on our Determination; if ſeveral accidental difficulties or diſcouragements do ſuddenly ariſe, that almoſt block up our way to the one, and many encouraging and inviting circumſtances appear, which ſeem to open our way to the other; in this caſe, I ſay, we may reaſonably conclude, it is the direction of providence that we ſhould purſue this rather than that. And

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hence ariſes the neceſſity, and appears the great uſe and advantage of Prayer for the interpoſition of a providential Direction in all affairs of difficulty and importance.

There is another thing on which ſome Chriſtians lay a mighty ſtreſs, as an indication of the Divine Will, *viz.* a ſudden ſtrong Impulſe upon the mind, which they conſider as a divine Monition, or the immediate Call of GOD. But I would by no means recommend this as a ſure *criterion* of a Divine Direction, or as a proper rule whereby to know the Will of GOD. Becauſe theſe ſecret ſuggeſtions or extraordinary impreſſions are, in this caſe, uncertain, dangerous, and unneceſſary.

They are *uncertain*. For how do we know but that they come from a very different hand? the great Enemy of our ſouls has a near acceſs to the lower powers of our mind; and covers his Deſigns with the utmoſt art, and under every appearance that is moſt deluſive and tempting. At beſt thoſe impreſſions may be only the mere workings of a warm Imagination.—In either caſe 'tis *dangerous* to truſt them. And ſome who have given themſelves up blindly to their lead,

lead, inſtead of following the Call of God, have been *led captive by Satan at his will.*— Beſides they are altogether *unneceſſary*. For either theſe ſudden ſtrong Impreſſions on the mind are agreeable to the directions of ſcripture and right reaſon, or they are not. If they are, we have no need of them; we have a ſurer and plainer Guide without them: if they are not, we ſhould immediately repel them as deceitful and inſnaring.

And having thus ſeen how we are to come at the Knowledge of the Divine Will in all caſes, I proceed now to the next thing I propos'd; which was

III. To conſider in what manner we are to comply with it.

We are *to live to it*. This is to be the meaſure of our conduct; our rule of life, at all times, and in every poſſible ſituation of our affairs. And this Rule we are to follow.

1. *Conſtantly and ſteadily*. There are many circumſtances wherein a faithful adherence to the will of God and the dictates of Conſcience will require much reſolution

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and ſelf-command. But in all ſuch caſes, wherein ſenſual inclination draws one way, and the dictates of Conſcience another, the latter is to be immediately and reſolutely prefer'd.

2. To *live* to the will of God, is to comply with it *impartially and univerſally*: to have *reſpect to all his Commands*. Some of the Divine laws are more eaſy or more agreeable to our diſpoſition than others; for which reaſon we are ready to extol and magnify them, as the moſt eſſential and indiſpenſible Points of true Religion. Whilſt others that are more difficult in their own nature, or more diſagreable to ours, though perhaps far more important, are neglected or diſeſteem'd. This is not to do the will of God impartially: and looks ill.

But 'tis much worſe to take upon us to compound with our Maker; by ſubſtituting ſomething of our own in the room of what he requires: as human ceremonies for divine inſtitutions, outward forms for inward Piety, orthodoxy for charity, zeal for humility, and a right faith inſtead of a holy life. This always ſhews a weak head, and I am afraid ſometimes a bad heart.

3. We

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3. We ſhould perform the Will of GOD with *alacrity and chearfulneſs:* and be thankful that he gives us opportunity and ability of doing what we know will be pleaſing to him. We are commanded to do the will of GOD *from the heart (f).* That is, not only with ſincerity but with pleaſure. *I delight to do thy will my GOD; yea thy law is within my heart* (*g*).

And we have all the reaſon in the world chearfully to ſerve ſo bountiful a Maſter; whoſe ſervice is perfect freedom, and whoſe rewards are unſpeakably glorious: and equally (that is infinitely) ſurpaſs all our Deſerts, and all our Thoughts.

Laſtly. We muſt do the will of GOD in a *humble dependance* on his Grace to help us to do it as he requires; and on his Providence to remove difficulties out of the way of our Duty, or enable us to ſurmount them. GOD knows we too often find a ſtrange reluctance to ſome parts of duty, which Conſcience dictates as indiſpenſible: and are ready to make every little difficulty an excuſe for the neglect of it. Which ſhews the neceſſity of frequent and earneſt Prayer

(*f*) Eph. vi. 6. (*g*) Pſalm xl. 8.

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that GOD would make us *both willing and obedient, in the day of his power.* And thus in dependance on his grace ſhould we endeavor *to ſtand perfect and compleat in the whole will of GOD* (*b*).

I proceed now to the laſt thing I propoſed, *viz.*

IV. To leave with you a few plain conſiderations very proper and powerful to induce us to make the Will of GOD the only Rule of life. And

1. The firſt Motive I ſhall mention is the greateſt that can be urg'd, *viz.* that this is the only way to ſecure the favour of GOD; which is the fountain of all our happineſs. And how can any one ever hope for his favour who takes no care to obey him? How would any wiſe parent on earth treat ſuch a ſon? GOD's conduct towards his children is always directed by their Behaviour towards him.

There were always a ſort of men in the world, who have imagin'd there is ſome nearer and ſmoother way to heaven than that

(*b*) Col. iv. 12.

that of Holineſs; or keeping the Commandments of GOD. There is a certain church in the world (by far the moſt erroneous and corrupt in all the chriſtian world) which has invented a way whereby men may become mighty religious without one grain of virtue; yea, though deſtitute of common honeſty. Who pay a much greater regard to the Decretals of Popes, and the Deciſions of Councils, than the laws of GOD and the precepts of Chriſt. SERM. XI.

And if we look among the profane Part of mankind in every Proteſtant country, who, in a total neglect of *the Will of GOD*, form their way of life according to the *luſts of men*, we ſhall find this principle univerſally prevail among them; 'that they doubt 'not they ſhall be ſafe enough hereafter, 'without troubling their heads about Reli-'gion ſo much as ſome preciſe chriſtians 'do.' That is, in plain terms, they doubt not but that GOD (the all-wiſe and moſt righteous GOD) is very well pleas'd with them, though they take no care at all to pleaſe him. And though all their lives are ſpent in offending and affronting him, yet they make no queſtion but that they are in

favour with him, and ſhall be happy at laſt; notwithſtanding he does in his own word moſt ſolemnly declare to the contrary.

And I am ſorry to ſay it, that among regular and profeſſing Chriſtians, there are ſome weak enough to imagine that obedience to the laws of GOD (which they call *Works*) is not neceſſary to ſalvation: expecting to be juſtified by faith only, tho' they are told by GOD himſelf; that without *Works that Faith is dead.* This is *ſtrong deluſion*, and would be more fatal did not many of them, by a happy ſelf-contradiction, live down their own principles, and practiſe that obedience the neceſſity whereof they deny.

This notion (which originally ſprang from *Cerinthus* and was propagated by the *Gnoſtics*) was creeping into the church ſo early as the Apoſtle *John*'s days: againſt which he gave the uncorrupted chriſtians a ſolemn caution in theſe words (1 *Joh.* iii. 7.) *Little children, let no man deceive you, he that doeth righteouſneſs is righteous.* So ſaith our Saviour, *not every one that ſaith unto me, LORD, LORD, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father*

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Father which is in heaven (*k*). *For without holineſs* (that is, without a life of practical piety directed and conducted by the will of God) *no man ſhall ſee the* LORD (*l*).

2. To form our lives and tempers by the will of God is the only thing that prepares us for the happineſs of heaven. It is not only the condition of it, but our requiſite qualification for it: 'tis our only Diſpoſition to enjoy it: than which nothing can ſet the neceſſity of practical piety, or a life of habitual Holineſs, in a ſtronger light. It is our eſſential happineſs: the true felicity and perfection of our nature, and 'tis not only *our* perfection and happineſs, but 'tis the perfection and happineſs of Angels: it is the perfection and happineſs of every rational and intelligent Being in the whole creation of God. There neither is, nor can be any other meaſure of a creatures happineſs but this. And this unreſerv'd obedience and abſolute conformity to the will of God, not only now is, but ever will be equally neceſſary to our perfection and happineſs, in all the never-ending ages of our future exiſtence in the unſeen world.

There

(*k*) Mat. vii. 21. (*l*) Heb. xii. 14.

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There indeed we ſhall perform it with a Joy and Alacrity unknown to us *here*. But this which will be our Buſineſs and Bleſſedneſs in heaven, we muſt begin on earth. And thanks be to GOD, who under all the diſadvantages of a corrupt and mortal nature, hath given us the fulleſt light to direct us, and all ſufficient grace, to enable us, to comply with that which is not only neceſſary to, but the very pledge and principle of all our future Bliſs.

3. A conſiſtency of character as the diſciples and followers of CHRIST, ſhould powerfully induce us to comply with what has now been urged upon us. For herein *hath he ſet us an example that we ſhould walk in his ſteps*. This was the only rule and meaſure whereby he conducted himſelf thro' life, *I ſeek not mine own will, but the will of my Father who ſent me* (*k*). *Not as I will, but as thou wilt* (*l*). *My meat is to do the will of him that ſent me, and to finiſh his work* (*m*). *I delight to do thy will my GOD: Yea thy law is in my heart* (*n*) Would we approve ourſelves conſiſtent Chriſtians then, the real diſciples

(*k*) Joh. v. 30. (*l*) Mat. xxvi. 39. (*m*) Joh. iv. 34. (*n*) Pſa. xl. 8.

diſciples of *Jeſus Chriſt*, our temper and life ſhould be the ſame.

4. Thus to direct and determine our Conduct uniformly and univerſally, is the beſt way to paſs ſafely and comfortably thro' the world. Here we have a certain clue to guide us thro' the labyrinth of Life: which will infallibly lead us to a happy end. If we follow thoſe other rules by which the generality ſuffer themſelves to be conducted, *the Luſts of Men*, the direction of Fancy, the call of Appetite, the impulſe of Paſſion, or the bent of ſenſual Inclinations, they will not only betray us into inextricable difficulties, but finally plunge us into remedileſs ruin.

In every critical circumſtance of life then, we have only to aſk ourſelves this one plain Queſtion — 'What is moſt agreeable now 'to the Will of GOD? what wou'd he 'have me to do in this caſe? which courſe 'of action is moſt pleaſing to him? *that* 'ſhall abſolutely determine my choice, tho' 'it may lie moſt tranſverſe to the inclina-'tions of the fleſh,' — And here a careful application of the foremention'd rules whereby to know the Will of GOD (together with humble prayer for Direction) will

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will never fail to lead us right: for that which is the plain dictate of conſcience, and is moſt agreable to right reaſon and the holy ſcriptures, is certainly the Will of GOD; and what we may as ſafely depend upon as if we heard it pronounc'd by a voice from heaven.

Laſtly. A conſciouſneſs of this, that we have thus uniformly and ſincerely made the *will of GOD* the Rule of our life in oppoſition to *the luſts of men*, will afford us the moſt ſolid comfort on a dying bed. Not indeed as the foundation on which we can rely for our Juſtification before the Bar of GOD (for after all, we ſhall ſee many groſs and ſhameful defects in our obedience which will mortify and humble us; and make us thankfully repair to the Atonement of Chriſt, as our only Refuge) but as an evidence of our Sincerity and Uprightneſs before GOD; and that we have a warrant to fly to that Refuge.

A conſciouſneſs of this will diſarm the laſt enemy of his ſting and terror. To die *then* is to *ſleep in Jeſus:* to ceaſe from labour, and go to reſt. Like *David*, who *after he had ſerved his own generation by the will of*

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of GOD (or, as it may rather be render'd, *after he had ſerved the will of GOD in his own generation*) *fell aſleep* (*r*).

To conclude: *if ye know theſe things, happy are ye if you do them.* And *let me beſeech you Brethren* (in the words of the Apoſtle *Paul*) *and exhort you by the LORD JESUS, that as ye have now received of us how you ought to walk and to pleaſe GOD, ſo you would abound more and more* (*s*). And happy, thrice happy are they who, in the ſoreſt diſtreſs of life, and in the near views of death can with him ſay, *our rejoicing is this, the Teſtimony of conſcience, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, not with fleſhly wiſdom* (or by the luſts of men) *but by the grace of GOD* (and according to the will of GOD) *we have had our converſation in the world.*

The HYMN.

I.

Thee, deareſt Lord, my ſoul adores,
I would be only thine;
To thee my heart and all its powers
I willingly reſign.

II. Give

(*r*) Acts xiii. 36.—ἰδία γενεᾷ ὑπηρετήσας τῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ βουλῇ.---Blackwall's ſacred Claſſics, p. 184. (*s*) 1 Theſſ. iv. 1.

II.

Give me a calm and thankful heart,
From every murmur free;
The bleſſings of thy grace impart,
That I may live to thee.

III.

Whate'er thy ſacred will ordains,
O, give me ſtrength to bear;
And let me know my Father reigns,
And truſt his tender Care.

IV.

Whate'er thy providence denies,
I calmly would reſign:
For thou art juſt, and good, and wiſe:
Lord, bend my will to thine.

V.

Be this the purpoſe of my ſoul,
And my determin'd choice,
To yield to thy ſupreme controul,
And in thy will rejoice.

VI.

O, may I never faint nor tire,
Nor wander from thy ways;
But (which is all my ſoul's deſire)
Help me to live thy praiſe.

SER-

SERMON XII.

Of Communion with GOD.

1 JOHN i. 3.

-----our fellowſhip is with the Father, and with his Son JESUS CHRIST.

LET us read the whole verſe. *That which we have ſeen and heard, declare we unto you; that ye alſo may have fellowſhip with us: and truly our fellowſhip is with the Father,* and *with his Son* JESUS CHRIST. SERM. XII.

The original word, which is here render'd *fellowſhip*, more properly ſignifies *communion*: and, I think, had better been tranſlated ſo in this place, *Our communion is with the Father, and with his Son* JESUS CHRIST.

The

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The laſt branch of Piety I ſhall take particular notice of, is what we commonly call *Communion with GOD:* which (like the other Divine virtues before explain'd) whilſt it is our indiſpenſible Duty, is at the ſame time our unſpeakable Privilege.

I ſhall take up no part of your time in explaining the context to which theſe words belong; as the ſenſe of them doth by no means depend upon their connexion with it: but proceed immediately to treat the ſubject propoſed, by ſhewing you

I. What we are to underſtand by Communion in general.

II. What by Communion with GOD.

III. How this Divine Communion is to be maintain'd.

Laſtly. I ſhall conclude with ſome proper Reflections on the Subject.

I. What we are to underſtand by Communion in general.

1. The

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1. The original word (*a*) in its ſtrict and proper ſenſe ſignifies, holding ſomething *in common* with another; whether it be a matter of property, privilege or honour: and what is thus held in common is the ſubject and bond of Communion. Hence 'tis ſometimes, as in the text, call'd *Fellowſhip:* and in commercial life, *Copartnerſhip.* In this ſenſe it is uſed, *Acts* xi. 42. *and they continued ſtedfaſt in the Apoſtles doctrine and fellowſhip, and in breaking bread, and in prayers.* That is, they faithfully adher'd to the Apoſtles and to the Doctrine they taught; join'd with them in the ſtated celebration of the Lord's Supper, and in their Prayers, and in Fellowſhip; or in having all things common among them.

2. In a more general ſenſe the word *Communion* ſignifies *Conformity* or *Agreement.* As 2 Cor. vi. 14. *what fellowſhip* (i. e. conformity) *hath righteouſneſs with unrighteouſneſs? what communion* (or agreement) *hath light with darkneſs?* So Eph. v. 11. *Have no fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs; but reprove them rather.* That is, inſtead of conforming to them, rebuke them; have

(*a*) κοινωνία.

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nothing to do with them, but to cenſure and diſcountenance them.

And hence the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is by ſome eminently call'd *the Communion*; becauſe herein we make a publick profeſſion of our Conformity to *Chriſt* and his laws, and of our Agreement with other chriſtians in the ſpirit and faith of his Goſpel.

3. There is yet another ſenſe in which the word *Communion* is often uſed, *viz.* to ſignify *Converſe* or friendly *Intercourſe*; wherein men *contrive* or *conſult* together about matters of common concern. So *the Jews communed* (i. e. confer'd) *together what they ſhould do with* JESUS (*b*). And ſo the *Pſalmiſt* directs us *to commune with our own hearts* (*c*).

Now theſe ſeveral particulars duly attended to will ſhew us

II. What we are to underſtand by *Communion with GOD.*

Communion with GOD is that free and delightful Intercourſe which the pious man keeps

(*b*) Luke vi. 11. (*c*) Pſalm iv. 4.

keeps up with his Maker, reſembling a mutual converſe or correſpondence between two friends. SERM. XII.

So that this communion with GOD is a privilege peculiar to good men; and can be enjoy'd by none but thoſe that love him, and are like him. Likeneſs begets Love; and Love begets Communion; and Communion, Pleaſure; which is always in proportion to the excellence and value of the Object, or its capacity to make us happy.

Communion implies a Union of hearts and intereſt: and in this view, it is the ſame thing as a cloſe and cordial Friendſhip. And therefore a Communion with the bleſſed GOD muſt be the ſource of the higheſt happineſs: as it is an intimate union and friendſhip with the beſt of Beings, who is moſt able to beſtow it.

As Communion is mutual Intercourſe, founded on mutual Friendſhip, it infers the communication of mutual Benefits and good Offices, in proportion to the reſpective capacities of thoſe who are thus connected; and a mutual Benevolence, or a deſire to oblige by ſerving the intereſt of each other: and therefore they who enjoy communion with

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GOD, while they make it their conſtant care to ſerve and pleaſe him, receive the moſt gracious communications from him.

But I proceed now to the principal thing I intended, *viz.*

III. To conſider by what means this Communion between GOD and the pious Soul is mutually maintain'd.

On the part of the Chriſtian it is maintain'd by *contemplation*, *faith*, and *prayer*: and on the part of GOD, by his *word*, his *ordinances*, and his *holy Spirit*.—Let us attend to each of theſe particulars diſtinctly. And

1. One way whereby the pious Chriſtian keeps up a holy Communion with GOD, is *Contemplation*, or Meditation. Wherein he frequently turns his thoughts to GOD, and takes every occaſion to entertain himſelf with a view of his glorious perfections. A ſerious, contemplative mind eyes GOD in every thing; the diſſolute and profane man acknowledges him in nothing. Thus one is continually improving his acquaintance with his

his Maker; and the other contracts an habitual eſtrangement from him. SERM. XII.

And theſe devout Contemplations whereby the pious chriſtian keeps up a communion with his Maker, are not only ſtated (for they make a conſtant part of his ſecret devotion) but occaſional. And the more the mind is accuſtom'd to them, the more freely does it engage in them. Every uncommon Event or extraordinary Providence (eſpecially if it be ſolemn and ſtriking) readily excites them; and the impreſſions it makes are carefully retain'd, and often recall'd, till they have a religious effect, and are improv'd to the purpoſes of growing Piety. And then, and not till then, are thoſe Providences properly ſanctified.—'This Event, ſaith the wiſe and ſerious chriſtian, is 'of the Lord: and comes to anſwer ſome 'good end. O, let me not turn aſide mine 'ear from the voice of this Providence, that 'ſpeaks ſo loudly to me; nor diſappoint my 'heavenly Father's kind deſign therein.'

But it is not only in the ways of Providence, but in the works of Nature, that the pious Chriſtian contemplates his Maker;

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and adores the Divine Power, Wiſdom and Goodneſs, which are every where diſplay'd.

In the Infant ſeaſon of the year, when we ſee all nature reviving around us, and the vegetable kingdom ariſing into Bloom and verdure, what a ſcope is here for inquiſitive Thought, and what a call to the moſt pious and pleaſing Contemplation! — For inſtance, when we ſee the growing Plant put forth its tender leaves, let us ſay to our ſelves — what is it that cauſes the fibrous or bulbous roots of theſe Plants to extract and ſuck in thoſe juices of the earth, and only thoſe, that are proper for their growth and nouriſhment? by what *plaſtic* power does that juice aſcend and turn into ſap? Through what Pipes and Tubes of different ſizes does it paſs, which refine, concoct and meliorate it for its proper purpoſe? Where are thoſe fine and exquiſite Glands which ſeparate the aſcending ſap, thus prepared; diſtributing the groſſer part of it for the production of ſhoots and leaves, and preſerving the finer and more precious part to form and nouriſh the flowers and fruits? What is it that keeps up this chymical proceſs all the while the flowers or fruits are forming?

forming? and when they arrive at their full perfection or maturity, cauſes it to ceaſe? the remaining Juice deſcending into the root, excepting ſo much of it left in the Body of the tree or ſhrub, as is neceſſary to keep it alive, or preſerve the Veſſels in a right ſtate, for the ſame operation the next ſeaſon. — In a word, the powers of Vegetation do no leſs confound our phyſical reſearches than thoſe of Gravitation: where all Phyloſophy terminates in Divinity; aſcribing that to the immediate hand of God, or the Impulſe of a Divine power, which cannot be ſolv'd by any known principles of nature.

And here by the way, it may be obſerv'd; that as in the natural world there is one grand principle that prevails through out the whole, and into which all the capital operations of nature are to be reſolv'd, *viz*, Attraction; the Attraction of *coheſion*, whereby all the particles of matter in Bodies cloſely adhere together; and the Attraction of *gravitation*, by which all Bodies tend toward their proper Center; ſo, analogous to this, there is one grand principle diffus'd through out the moral World, *viz*, that of Love; Love to our fellow-creatures,

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whereby our hearts are united or knit together in ſtrong affection; and Love to GOD, by which our Souls tend to him as their Center of eternal Reſt.

Thus as all things came from GOD, all things lead us to him: all things declare him; all things teach him; and in every thing we ſee him. And thus by means of ſerious Reflection and pious Contemplation, we may keep up a daily Communion with him.

2. *Faith* is another inſtrument whereby this heavenly intercourſe or converſe with our Maker is maintain'd on our part. From the Works of nature, reaſon and contemplation diſcover and demonſtrate the reality of the Divine Being and Perfections. But Faith goes further; and not only demonſtrates, but exhibits them; and repreſents them, not only as real but viſible; as far as it is poſſible for them to be ſo, to creatures in our ſituation. This is remark'd as the effect of *Moſes'* Faith, that *he endured, as ſeeing him who is inviſible, whom no Man hath ſeen or can ſee.* (*a*)

This

(*a*) Heb. xi. 27.

This Faith, when regularly exercis'd on the ways and works and word of God, ſupplies the place of all Miracles. And without it indeed all Miracles wou'd have no convictive influence. For Miracles themſelves reach only the ſenſes: and if they ſtop there, they are fruitleſs. It is Faith, excited by them, that carries the Impreſſion to the Heart, and forms the conviction intended by them on the mind. And are not the wonders of creation, and the regular operations and courſe of nature, as proper to excite that Faith in a thinking mind, as the Interruption of it? SERM. XII.

Faith not only realizes to the mind the glory and excellence of the Divine perfections, and impreſſes it with a lively conception of them, and excites in it ſentiments of piety correſponding to them; but as a principal means and inſtrument of Communion with God, it extends its effects farther, and conſiders him as always with us; an ever-preſent friend; attentive to our thoughts, words, ways, complaints and conduct; more conſcious to all our feelings, diſpoſitions, and deſires, than we are ourſelves. And this aſſurance of the

Divine

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Divine Omnipreſence, Faith imprints upon the mind with the deepeſt conviction: compared to which, a bare feeble Aſſent, not accompanied with a ſuitable influence on the life and temper, is but like a midnight Dream, ſcarce ſooner recollected than forgot. Were it firmly believ'd, what can fill the mind with a more awful reverence than the preſence of its Creator? and were it ſuitably improved, where can we meet with a more powerful motive to the practice of univerſal virtue?

3. Another thing neceſſary to keep up this ſpiritual Intercourſe and Communion with GOD, is Prayer: conſtant, ſerious, humble, fervent Prayer. For 'tis this kind of Prayer only that (the Apoſtle *James* tells us) is effectual, or *availeth much* (*b*). *That* Prayer wherein the heart is warmly and devoutly engaged, an exerciſe as different from a mere formal, lifeleſs, unattentive diſcharge of this Duty, as the manner in which the Apoſtle *Paul* perform'd it before and after his Converſion. Whilſt he was a *Phariſee* he did not pray; he only ſaid his long Prayers: but as ſoon as he became a Chriſtian, *Behold, he prayeth* (*c*).

And

(*b*) Jam. v. 19. (*c*) Act. ix. 11.

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And theſe Prayers muſt not only be ſtated, but occaſional. The pious chriſtian that deſires Communion with GOD will be often lifting up his heart to heaven in ſecret Ejaculations; when his faith gives him a ſtrong view of GOD in any extraordinary or affecting diſpenſation of his providence, or when he is ſtruck with a deep ſenſe of his wiſdom, power or goodneſs in the contemplation of his works; and earneſtly, tho' ſecretly, begs that thoſe incidental Impreſſions may be improv'd to a better acquaintance with GOD, and a more habitual Converſe with him.

Prayer in the language of the *Pſalmiſt*, is a *lifting up the Soul to GOD* (*d*): and in the ſtile of one of the antient fathers (*Clement* of *Alexandria*) it is a *Converſe with GOD* (*e*). Put theſe two Ideas together, and you have a perfect definition of Prayer; and

(*d*) Pſa. xxv. 1.

(e) Ἔστιν ἂν ὡς εἰπεῖν τολμηρότερον, ὁμιλία πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν ἡ εὐχή. Therefore Prayer, if I may be ſo bold to ſay ſo, is a converſation with GOD.——Again, ὁ γνωστικὸς παρὰ ὅλον εὐχεῖται τὸν βίον, διὰ εὐχῆς συνεῖναι μὲν σπεύδων Θεῷ. A good man (or one who truly knows GOD) prays to him all his life; and by this means endeavours to keep up a conſtant intercourſe with him. Clem. Alex. Strom. l. 7. p. 854. Ed. Ox.

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and at the ſame time ſee how indiſpenſible a means it is to keep up a communion with the father of our Spirits. It is to abſtract our heart and thoughts from the world, and raiſe them up to GOD, in a humble adoration of his infinite excellence and glory, in grateful praiſes for all his Benefits, with expreſſions of our moſt earneſt deſire of his continued Favour and Preſence; and thus to hold a conſtant intercourſe and converſe with our Maker.

2. Let us now conſider how this communion between GOD and good men is maintain'd on his part.

As they hold communion with him in all thoſe ways whereby they acquire a greater Acquaintance with him and Love to him, *viz*, by Contemplation, Faith and Prayer; ſo he holds communion with them in all thoſe ways whereby he communicates the Knowledge of himſelf to them, and confers the richeſt ſpiritual Bleſſings upon them, *viz*, by his Word, by his Ordinances, and by his holy Spirit. By theſe he ſpeaks to them, and converſes with them intimately and freely, as one friend with another.—I ſhall briefly ſpeak to each of theſe, and then conclude

conclude with a few reflections on the Subject. SERM. XII.

1. One principal means whereby God communes with and communicates himſelf to good men, is his holy Word: which he formerly inſpired the Prophets and Apoſtles to indite, and hath taken care by his Providence to preſerve, and tranſmit thro' every age of the church down to our own time. And that compleat and explicite Revelation which he hath given us by his Son, containing a clear accompliſhment of preceding prophecies, is inſtead of, and far ſuperior to the evidence of all Miracles, by which ſome of the former periods of the church were diſtinguiſh'd.

The Word of God may be conſider'd as the Epiſtle of his Love; whereby he in Heaven holds correſpondence with us on Earth; and therein expreſſes the greateſt good will towards us, and the fulleſt aſſurance of his remembrance of us, and readineſs to help us: enrich'd with the moſt ſuitable Promiſes, the wiſeſt Counſels, the ſureſt and plaineſt Directions, anſwerable to (and effectual to convey the moſt ſovereign relief under) all the emergencies, difficulties and diſtreſſes

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diſtreſſes we can be in, during our abſence from him in this ſtrange land: diſperſes the clouds that obſcured the light of nature, pours a flood of day on the expanded mind, and opens all the raviſhing proſpects of future Immortality and eternal Bliſs.

2. To give this token of his love a greater effect, he hath inſtituted his holy Ordinances, and a ſtanding Miniſtry in his Church; to make the gracious Contents of his word the more eaſily intelligible and familiar to us, and adapted to the loweſt underſtanding. That in caſe this Epiſtle of his Love ſhould fall into the hands of any of his children who cannot read (if I may ſo expreſs it) others may read it for them, and explain it to them; that ſo none may be deprived of the grace and comfort it was deſign'd to convey; ſince the contents of it are directed, and are of equal concern, to all.—And moreover

3. That we may not only underſtand the true ſenſe, but feel the genuine power, light and impreſſion of thoſe Divine truths, and experience the pious affections they were intended to excite, he hath given us his holy Spirit to ſpeak them to our hearts: to remove

move our carnal prejudices, enlighten and dilate our underſtandings to take in a larger ſcope of Divine knowledge, and make us wiſe unto eternal life. SERM. XII.

This Doctrine of the converting, enlightening, quickening, ſanctifying, comforting, and confirming grace and operation of the holy Spirit of God, is, when rightly underſtood and judiciouſly applied, of the higheſt importance in the chriſtian life. But thro' the extravagant miſtakes which ſome weak but well-meaning minds have run into concerning it, it begins to grow into neglect with ſome and contempt with others. Which I can look upon in no other light than as a device and ſtratagem of the great enemy of all Truth and Goodneſs, in working on the weakneſs of ſome to countenance thoſe miſtakes, and on the prejudice of others, for that reaſon, to ridicule and reject one of the moſt important Doctrines of chriſtianity: and thereby deprive many a pious and ſerious Chriſtian of that ſteady light, conſolation and ſupport they might receive from it.

This conſideration ſhould be a ſtrong Inducement to us, on the one hand, to beware how

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how we entertain any wrong or ungrounded ſentiments of this Doctrine of chriſtianity; and on the other, that we do not receive any prejudices againſt it from the miſtakes which others have unwarily imbib'd concerning it. Both which are of dangerous conſequence.

The ſame may be ſaid of other Doctrines of the Goſpel; which being perverted and miſrepreſented by the Ignorance or blind zeal of ſome, are therefore disbeliev'd and rejected by the precipitate Prejudice of others. Which ſhews the neceſſity of Candor, Caution and Judgment; and the need we all have of the influence and conduct of that good Spirit, who is ſent to *lead us into all truth.*

To conclude now with a few proper Reflections upon this Subject.

1. What infinite condeſcenſion and goodneſs is it in the GOD of Heaven, to eſtabliſh ſuch a method of Correſpondence, and hold ſuch intimate Communion with his ſinful creatures here on Earth! An honour to which the ambition of the higheſt Angel durſt not aſpire. And will that GOD whom the *heaven of heavens cannot contain, in very deed*

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deed dwell with man? — This is a diſcovery of grace peculiar to the Chriſtian revelation. Of which the Pagan world had not the leaſt notice; and the Jews but a very obſcure one, compar'd with the clear manifeſtation of it in the Goſpel. Here 'tis ſet forth in a great variety of views and expreſſion.— Sometimes, by the *Spirit of GOD dwelling in us. Ye are not in the fleſh* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *but in the Spirit, if ſo be that the Spirit of GOD dwelleth in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of CHRIST, he is none of his. And if CHRIST be in you, the Body is dead becauſe of ſin; but the Spirit is life becauſe of righteouſneſs. But if the Spirit of him who raiſed up JESUS CHRIST from the dead dwell in you, he that raiſed up CHRIST from the dead ſhall alſo quicken your mortal bodies,* by *his Spirit that dwelleth in you (f).* — Sometimes 'tis expreſſed by the phraſe of GOD *dwelling in us, and we in him. If we love one another, GOD dwelleth in us, and his Love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, becauſe he hath given us of his Spirit. Whoſo ſhall confeſs that JESUS is the Son of GOD,*

v. i. 9—11.

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GOD dwelleth in him, and he in GOD. GOD is Love; and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in GOD, and GOD in him (g).— Sometimes it is denoted by the emblem of a Feaſt or Banquet, which one friend maketh for another: not only to intimate the perfect freedom of Converſe (ſo uſual at Feaſts) which the pious Soul at ſuch ſeaſons enjoys with his Maker, but the ſenſible ſtrength and refreſhment he derives from thence. *Behold I ſtand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in unto him, and will ſup with him, and he with me (h).*

So that this privilege may be conſider'd as in a manner peculiar to the Goſpel Diſpenſation: and as one ſpecial fruit of CHRIST's mediation; through whom we are now permitted to approach to GOD as our Father and Friend, and to hold the moſt free and delightful Communion with him, by his Word and Spirit.--O, what aſtoniſhing condeſcenſion is this in the great GOD, to us the meaneſt and moſt unworthy of all his reaſonable creatures!

2. Our

(g) 1 John iv. 12, 13, 15, 16. (h) Rev. iii. 20.

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2. Our communion with JESUS CHRIST, which is mention'd in the text together with our communion with GOD, is maintain'd in the ſame manner, *viz.* on our part by Meditation, Faith and Prayer; and on his, by his Word, and Ordinances, and holy Spirit: whom he expreſsly promis'd to ſend to be with all his faithful diſciples to the end of the world; to ſupply the want of his perſonal preſence among them.

3. How great is the Honour and Happineſs of all true Chriſtian Believers!—How great their Honour! to have the King of Heaven (tho' inviſible to them) always preſent, and kindly converſing with them! And this communion which the Father of their ſpirits holds with them by the communications of grace, light and comfort, is what pious men commonly call the ſpecial *preſence of GOD:* which is better known by experience than deſcription.—And how great their Happineſs! to have GOD always preſent with them to direct, ſupport and help them in every time of need! who is always *a friend at hand, and never afar off.* but let it be remember'd

4. That this is a privilege peculiar to real Chriſtians: and confer'd eſpecially on thoſe that are moſt humble and devout. A pleaſure which the wicked are not capable of enjoying; nor indeed of conceiving. And to guard againſt the deluſions of imagination in this matter (for it muſt be own'd that this doctrine has ſometimes been abuſed to enthuſiaſtical purpoſes) let it be always remember'd, that unleſs this communion be kept up on our part, by ſerious Contemplation, lively Faith, and fervent Prayer (which imply growing holineſs and humility) we can expect no comfortable communications on GOD's part, from his Word, his Ordinances, and his holy Spirit. For all pretenſions made to theſe by perſons of an unchriſtian Life and Temper, proceed from the moſt deplorable and fatal Deception.

Laſtly. As a pure heart and holy life are neceſſary to fit us for this intercourſe and communion with the moſt pure and holy GOD (for *how can two walk together unleſs they are agreed?*) ſo this daily communion with GOD is the beſt means to promote the moſt exquiſite ſpirit of piety and heavenly Devotion. It is obſerved that our tempers always

always take a tincture from the Taſte and Manners of thoſe with whom we moſt intimately converſe. This Divine communion then gradually and greatly promotes a Divine temper. And thus by walking with GOD on earth, we become more fit to dwell with him in heaven: *in whoſe preſence is fullneſs of Joy, and at whoſe right hand are pleaſures for ever more.* SERM. XII.

Thus have I particularly gone over the moſt important of all the *Divine Virtues:* or thoſe Duties which we more immediately owe to GOD. The next I ſhall enter upon are the *Chriſtian Virtues*, properly ſo called: or thoſe Duties which we more immediately owe to CHRIST. Which will be conſider'd in ſeveral Diſcourſes immediately following.

The HYMN.

I.

Our heavenly father calls,
And CHRIST invites us near;
With both our friendſhip ſhall be ſweet
And our communion dear.

II. GOD

II.

GOD pities all our griefs;
He pardons every day;
Almighty to protect my ſoul,
And wiſe to guide my way.

III.

How large his bounties are!
What various ſtores of good
Diffus'd through my Redeemer's hand,
And purchas'd with his blood!

IV.

JESUS, my living head,
I bleſs thy faithful care,
Mine advocate before the throne;
And my forerunner there.

V.

Here fix, my roving heart;
Here wait, my warmeſt love,
Till the communion be compleat
In nobler ſcenes above.

5 JY61

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